

[REDACTED]: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Was there any special request that night? We can't find any record of any special request from the command post that requested cover for the convoy. There was a request for air cover for the beach. Do you have any recollection of a request for cover for the convoy?

[REDACTED]: No, there was no requirement at night.

QUESTION: But for cover for them to withdraw the next day?

[REDACTED]: No, not that I recall.

QUESTION: Looking back on this naval action, what are the big lessons that we should bear in mind?

[REDACTED]: Well, number one, you can't plan an operation like this without the wholehearted or all-out support of the military. You have to cut the military in completely.

QUESTION: Would you say you didn't have the wholehearted support of the military?

[REDACTED]: I think the Navy did everything they possibly could within the limitations imposed upon them, but I feel that from the very beginning that there was never the necessary coordination with the military. The whole thing was based on arriving at the beach and conducting a landing without opposition. I think the whole operation was based on the assumption that Castro's air force would be destroyed.

QUESTION: If that was the assumption then why was the decision made to go to the open sea during daylight? If you'd destroyed the air force you wouldn't need to go to sea because they couldn't have moved artillery up in that time. There seems to be a little inconsistency there. Undoubtedly the plan was to unload and get out to sea, but if you have destroyed the air force you don't have to get out of there.

STATEMENT: I think they wanted to make it appear that this force had come from Cuba somewhere and consequently they wanted to get the ships out of there.

MR. DULLES: Yes, but they were Cuban ships and Cuban crews and Cuban owned, everything about them was Cuban.

[REDACTED]: There were several considerations, Mr. Dulles. One was to have them in there in time for landing the troops. Our plan was to unload the one small ship, the RIO. We knew the RIO would be there at daylight, but the other ships were to get the troops off and get out. There was no need to keep them there because their cargo was such it wouldn't be required until later on. The RIO was the key ship.

QUESTION: If they could unload them in four or five hours, why was it that actually very little was unloaded?

[REDACTED]: That's correct. However, we knew it would take longer to offload the RIO. She had the vehicles, deck cargo, and so on.

QUESTION: I thought you said earlier that it would take about four or five hours?

[REDACTED]: No. At Red Beach I said it would take about four hours to offload her troops and their personal equipment at Red Beach, just the gear they carried ashore with them.

QUESTION: Wasn't there anything else aboard?

[REDACTED]: Not very much. Just deck cargo, gasoline drums, and that sort of thing. They were to come back later on and unload their big stuff at Blue Beach.

QUESTION: Were all the ships supposed to be unloaded by dawn?

[REDACTED]: No, sir, only the troops and their essential equipment, not their cargo and such.

STATEMENT: I never heard this before. I thought they were supposed to be gone from there at dawn. That's not true?

[REDACTED]: Yes, with the exception of the RIO. The RIO was to stay on and offload at Blue Beach, using the LCUs. The other ships were to evacuate to a given point offshore.

QUESTION: Why wasn't this plan carried out?

[REDACTED]: Because they were caught at dawn still there.

QUESTION: Why were they caught at dawn if the plan was to be out of there?



[REDACTED]: We knew it would be very close to dawn.

STATEMENT: But they really didn't get started unloading.

RESPONSE: I think the 5th Battalion Commander hadn't started to unload and as some of the boats wouldn't work, so I think it was a breakdown in command and mechanical problems.

[REDACTED]: Of course, this was not a U.S. Navy style operation. The only time they got together was just before they sailed. There was absolutely no rehearsal.

QUESTION: What would you say about the naval plan now, if you had to do it again with the same ships and everything?

[REDACTED]: I don't think I'd change anything. However, if I could change the boats, I'd have a different type of boat to offload the troops. This was a last minute consideration.

QUESTION: If you had a command ship in the actual Bay area, would that have been helpful?

[REDACTED]: I think it would have been a tremendous help. Trying to run the operation from Washington created much delay.

QUESTION: Supposing it didn't have to be kept so secret, how would you have run it?

[REDACTED]: Then I would have tried to bring the Navy into it more from the very beginning. I wasn't brought in until the very last, and the plan had essentially been drawn up, for the TRINIDAD operation in particular. I think it was a grave error that the Navy wasn't brought in from the very beginning. The whole requirement was for logistic support and the type of craft to be used for offloading of troops should have been given much greater consideration. We were banking strictly on the LCUs and LCVPs that were provided.

QUESTION: Did it occur to you before the landing that these small boats were not adequate?

[REDACTED]: I knew they were inadequate. But we were faced with a problem of buying craft that could offload the troops in a hurry and procurement

[REDACTED]

was a big problem in the short time that we had. We had to settle on what was available and what they could get.

QUESTION: Did this mean any kind of boats that they could get?

[REDACTED]: At this time, yes.

QUESTION: When was this time?

[REDACTED]: About ten days or two weeks before the actual operation. We had to procure them, get them assembled, send them down to Puerto Cabezas, load them aboard ships, and train some crews to run them.



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*Sandwiched version*

*MP*

MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

PARAMILITARY STUDY GROUP MEETING

17 MAY 1961

PRESENT

GENERAL TAYLOR

MR. KENNEDY

MR. DULLES

ADMIRAL BURKE

MR. SAN ROMAN

MR. ESTRADA

Mr. ROYOROSA

MR. LOPEZ

MR. BETANCOURT

*Declassified by authority of EO 11652 Section 11 and  
NSC letter dated 9/13/76 by Mous B. Allen 10/18/76.*

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ROBERTO PEREZ SAN ROMAN

(Brother of the Brigade Commander and CO of the Heavy Weapons Battalion)

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

MR. SAN ROMAN: I had eleven months' training which I feel was very good training. We had a good unit; there was high intelligence; and everyone was trained well; and I think we had a good chance of success because of the fine training we had. All the commanders liked the plan when they saw it.

QUESTION: When did you brief your troops?

MR. SAN ROMAN: I was briefed in Nicaragua just before going aboard ship, and I briefed my troops two days later out on the ocean.

QUESTION: Did you have weapons other than 4.2s?

MR. SAN ROMAN: Yes, but not with me. With me I had the Hq. Battalion and a 4.2 mortar platoon. The rest of my men and their weapons were attached to different units inasmuch as we were the heavy weapons battalion.

MR. SAN ROMAN: I went ashore at dawn about 5:30 or 6:00 in the morning on D Day.

QUESTION: Was there firing on the beach at that time?

MR. SAN ROMAN: Yes, and we were attacked by a B-26 almost immediately. It took us a while to unload our 4.2s because they were very heavy. I had about 60 rounds of 4.2 ammunition with the weapons, but I had additional ammunition on the trucks that came in on the LCUs. I never ran out of ammunition during the three-day period. I was simply short of ammunition and I had to cut down the requests. For example, if they would request six rounds of fire, I would only be able to give them maybe two. As soon as we were organized, I moved my platoon toward San Blas. We arrived there at 9 to 9:30 on the morning of D Day. There I met the airborne commander of the First Battalion. The airborne had cleared the hospital area to the west of San Blas.



QUESTION: Had the airborne troops hit their drop zone?

MR. SAN ROMAN: Yes, about 3 o'clock the outpost established by the airborne unit received fire from the militia.

QUESTION: How did the militia come at you?

MR. SAN ROMAN: On foot, down the road.

QUESTION: How was the swamp? Could they get off the road?

MR. SAN ROMAN: I think they could have, but I don't think they liked the water.

STATEMENT: I get the impression that they first brought in troops; they were given something of a bloody nose; and then they used artillery and aircraft in their attack against the invasion force. Is that right?

MR. SAN ROMAN: Yes.

MR. SAN ROMAN: Later, at about 1630, the outpost was surrounded so I sent in a tank, some 3.5 mortars, 75mm recoilless rifles, 50 calibre M/G, and some of the men. Following this, the outpost personnel withdrew to a point 3 to 4 km south of San Blas.

QUESTION: Where were your mortars?

MR. SAN ROMAN: I was out of range.

MR. SAN ROMAN: After the original fighting, the militia only came in on foot again after two days of artillery fire. At about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, Alex sent word that he wanted me by messenger. All our radios were inoperative because we off-loaded so far out they got wet when we came ashore. Anyway, at dawn of D+1, Alex told me to move fast to about two kilometers north of San Blas.

QUESTION: What time did you fall back?

MR. SAN ROMAN: About 6 to 7 o'clock in the morning. We had no radios, so I went to see the Brigade Commander.

QUESTION: What was happening on the beach?

MR. SAN ROMAN: Once in a while a plane would strafe the beach. My brother said that he didn't want to send the troops to Green Beach because they would be out of range of his radio. At the time I was there at 7:30, I was told that the situation was not good at Red Beach.

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QUESTION: What was the disposition of the various battalions at that time?

MR. SAN ROMAN: The First Battalion was split between Red and Blue Beach areas; the Second and Fifth Battalions were at Red Beach; the Sixth Battalion was between Red and Blue Beach in a semicircle; the Third and Fourth Battalions were at Blue Beach. When I told my brother about the situation in the San Blas area, he sent the Third Battalion up there and moved another unit out to cover the road that led to the east. I returned with the Third Battalion to my outfit. On that day the artillery started about 4 o'clock in the morning and they never stopped. They had lots of ammunition.

QUESTION: Do you think our planes could have knocked out their artillery.

MR. SAN ROMAN: Yes, very easily. That's what I don't understand. People want to fight, and know how to fight, and yet they can't because of the lack of air support.

QUESTION: Did you ever get any air support at all?

MR. SAN ROMAN: About 7:30 on Tuesday night, one of our B-26s came over and fired their machine guns and dropped napalm on Castro's artillery.

QUESTION: At the end of Tuesday, were there many casualties?

MR. SAN ROMAN: Not many because we were dug in. However, the airborne battalion had 10 to 15 casualties.

QUESTION: Did men of the invasion force abandon their ammunition when they fell back?

MR. SAN ROMAN: No, never.

QUESTION: At the end of Tuesday, were they short of ammunition?

MR. SAN ROMAN: Yes, they were short on rifle and 30 calibre machine gun ammunition and out of BAR and 50 calibre machine gun ammunition.

QUESTION: Was there any resupply from the beach?

MR. SAN ROMAN: No.

QUESTION: Why?

MR. SAN ROMAN: There was nothing to pick up at the beach.



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QUESTION: At the end of D-1, was everyone hurting for ammunition?

MR. SAN ROMAN: Yes. On Tuesday afternoon, we said we better be on the offensive, so we pushed the militia back, but we didn't have enough ammunition to follow through, so we had to fall back.

MR. SAN ROMAN: Then on Wednesday morning, the Third Battalion began to retreat with no order. We were receiving artillery fire, we had no ammunition, and so everyone fell back. The Brigade Commander told me to reorganize the Third Battalion and go back. He said that he had received some air drop supplies; that he had sent a pilot back with a paper informing the people back at the base about the situation at the beach, so I organized a bunch of men and we started back up to San Blas. We knocked out one tank after we made contact with the enemy but we were under extremely heavy artillery attack, so we had to fall back again. When we got to the beach, everything was under artillery attack. This was Wednesday, at about 2:30 PM. At that time, we saw a small boat offshore and swam out to it. We left the beach area at that time.

QUESTION: Was fighting going on to the west?

MR. SAN ROMAN: Yes.

QUESTION: Then the big attacks by Castro's forces were launched from the Red Beach area and from northeast of Blue Beach.

MR. SAN ROMAN: Yes.

MR. SAN ROMAN: Why didn't we have air support? We were supposed to.

RESPONSE: Were you told that you would have Navy air support?

MR. SAN ROMAN: No, but our own planes were supposed to bomb certain targets every day and they didn't. I don't know why they didn't stop the invasion if the air strikes were

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cancelled. Without air support, we were sure of going to our death. Frank said that everything in Cuba would be destroyed. This can be done with 16 planes and we knew there was a carrier nearby. We had radio contact with the carrier and I don't know why they didn't help us. We lost because we didn't have air support. If we had had air support, we could have gotten through to a town and our force would have been increased by five or six times. The way we had been briefed, we thought we were sure to win.

QUESTION: Had you discussed the possibility of becoming guerrillas?

MR. SAN ROMAN: Just between the J-3 and myself. We weren't briefed on becoming guerrillas. We were so sure that we were going to win that we didn't concern ourselves with this.

QUESTION: Did you have adequate rations?

MR. SAN ROMAN: Only the rations that we had when we landed.

QUESTION: Were the paratroop drops successful?

MR. SAN ROMAN: The men all landed where they were supposed to.

QUESTION: What was the reaction of the prisoners you took?

MR. SAN ROMAN: Some looked like fanatics and they were singing revolutionary songs. However, some of the others joined us.

QUESTION: What kind of weapons did Castro forces have?

MR. SAN ROMAN: They had semi-automatic rifles, sub-machine guns; they had good weapons. One of the men had a hammer and sickle emblem on his hat.

QUESTION: What about the people who were put in confinement at the base in Guatemala?

MR. SAN ROMAN: The different political groups in Miami all sent in representatives so that their men could try and gain control of the camp for them and thereby they would have influence in Cuba after the revolution. Furthermore, some of



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the big men in Miami when they arrived at the camp found they weren't big men anymore. They were soldiers just like everybody else. We military men were put in charge since we had more experience. The instructors kept us in charge as they realized that we had more experience. We had a penal code for discipline, of course, and since we were in a foreign country, we had to enforce it.

QUESTION: Did you court martial anyone?

MR. SAN ROMAN: Yes, we had court martials. However, we had no appropriate place to confine these people and also we needed them to do work so they didn't stay in confinement long.

QUESTION: Do you have any additional comments?

MR. SAN ROMAN: I want to know why we didn't get air support?

RESPONSE: That's one of the things we are looking into now.

QUESTION: What would you like to do now?

MR. SAN ROMAN: I would like to go to Cuba again. The situation is getting to be worse every day. We have to do something to clean up our country and make it democratic again. We need someone very strong to stand beside us, and the United States has always been very strong.

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MR. ESTRADA

(Mr. Estrada was the S-4 of the Airborne Battalion.)

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

MR. ESTRADA: I jumped with about 50 others north of San Blas. We lost a lot of the ammunition that was dropped with us. We had no communications with the Brigade because while our radios were good, the Brigade's were inoperative.

MR. ESTRADA: At about 5 o'clock Monday afternoon, we were attacked. However, the first real fire fight was at 12:30 Monday night. Following this, we were under heavy attack and finally about 2:30 Tuesday afternoon, we moved back to San Blas. We had no ammunition, so the Battalion Commander went to see the Brigade Commander and he returned with some ammunition. Beginning at about 2 o'clock Tuesday afternoon until Wednesday, we received a great deal of artillery fire.

QUESTION: Where was the artillery fire coming from?

MR. ESTRADA: All the fire was coming from the north. Wednesday, one of our B-26s came in, strafed, and dropped napalm on the artillery positions, and then we advanced with our tanks. However, after a short while, we began to receive artillery fire again and the CO told us to fall back to the beach.

QUESTION: What happened on the road back to the beach?

MR. ESTRADA: We knocked out some militia infantry and we captured a Castro Major. We wanted to get back to the beach to reorganize but we were under tremendous fire and so when we saw the ship offshore, we boarded it and left the area.

QUESTION: Was there ever any mention of your becoming guerrillas?

MR. ESTRADA: No, we had no plan to go to the mountains.

QUESTION: Do you think anyone escaped?



MR. ESTRADA: I think so.

QUESTION: What was the terrain like in this region?

MR. ESTRADA: It was heavily wooded.

QUESTION: What did you think of the training you received?

MR. ESTRADA: I've been in training since September. First, we had guerrilla training. I think that the training over-all was very good, particularly the paratroop training.

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EYES ONLY

ULTRASOUND ME

MR. ROYOROSA

(A member of the UDT team scheduled for Green Beach.)

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

QUESTION: Would you just tell us your story please?

MR. ROYOROSA: I was scheduled to land at Green Beach; however, it was decided to land the Green Beach force at Blue Beach. However, I was aboard the BLAGAR and I assumed the task of landing all the troops from the BLAGAR at Blue Beach. There were many messages coming to our ship asking where to go and what to do, and there was no one there to answer the questions; it was a tactical mistake, so I assumed the responsibility and got the troops landed. We came under air attack at about 7:30. We stayed off Blue Beach until about 11:00, and then we went out to sea. We were attacked three or four times on the way out. I went ashore one time early on D Day. Our G-2 was telling the people the purpose of our invasion and the people were very nice. They offered to help us take care of our wounded; even the fishermen told us where to find a new landing place. The fishermen told us that 6 o'clock was low tide and to bring the boats in then. So we got a lot of help from the local population. On Friday, our B-26s made their first attack. According to our information, our Air Force was supposed to bomb all the targets on the list, particularly all the airfields. However, on Friday, only three airfields were bombed, so I asked San Roman why. He couldn't give me an answer. He said he didn't know why they were not hit.

QUESTION: On D Day you went ashore and then you came back to the BLAGAR, and you stayed on the BLAGAR, and when the ship went out, you went out with it?

MR. ROYOROSA: That's right. I was on the radio constantly as I was a communications officer. I took most of the orders from the American destroyer.

YES ONLY

SENSITIVE



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QUESTION: Who was on the radio to the beach?

MR. ROYOROSA: Mr. Gray and I.

QUESTION: On D Day you went south 50 miles or so?

MR. ROYOROSA: All the merchant boats just kept on going. We stayed back with the LCUs because they could only go 5 or 6 knots.

QUESTION: When was the first report about a shortage of ammunition received by you.

MR. ROYOROSA: Monday afternoon.

QUESTION: During D+1, were you getting lots of requests for ammunition?

MR. ROYOROSA: That's right.

QUESTION: You were waiting for the ATLANTICO to come back, is that right?

MR. ROYOROSA: Yes, the ATLANTICO came back at 4:30 PM. We unloaded all the ammunition and tanks and everything into the three LCUs.

QUESTION: Then you started out with the 2 LCIs and 3 LCUs. About what time did you take off?

MR. ROYOROSA: We never got started, because we would have been sunk. We got there at 4:30, we started unloading at 5:30; and by the time we unloaded, it was late, about 11 o'clock. Consequently, we couldn't go in and unload and make it back out before daylight.

QUESTION: You never moved at all?

MR. ROYOROSA: No, sir. We never moved toward the beach because we never got air support.

QUESTION: Were you ordered into rescue operations?

MR. ROYOROSA: Yes, sir. On Sunday, at 10 o'clock in the morning, we picked up the first survivors. We picked up four men, and later we picked up 28 men. These people were in very bad condition. The last day we were spotted by the militia and we heard 50 calibre shots.

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they didn't know whether they were militia or our men, and they wanted to know if they could be evacuated. We were ready to go in but then they called it off. I think they found out that the men around the ship were militia.

QUESTION: Do you have anything you want to tell us?

MR. ROYOROSA: Yes. Most of our people feel we were in a way betrayed. We were sent in there to get slaughtered, because you know how we were armed -- we had two LCIs with 50 calibre machine guns, and the B-26s weren't adequate for the job. Furthermore, the engines on the boats wouldn't work. The method of landing was silly, with those little boats. Only two of the boats on the HUSTON worked. They did make some landings with the aluminum boats but not very many.

QUESTION: What happened to the aluminum boats? Were they left?

MR. ROYOROSA: When the RIO was sunk, they had some aluminum boats, and the crew came over to us in the aluminum boats, and then they let the boats drift away. We were under air attack at the time.

QUESTION: Was it your opinion that the men running the boats didn't know how to run them?

MR. ROYOROSA: Yes, the men only had two days' training and they couldn't run them at all.

QUESTION: Who was supposed to unload the ships?

MR. ROYOROSA: Well, you see, sir, the messages came in and the Captain didn't know Spanish, so I started translating. Every time he looked at something he couldn't understand, I had to explain it to him. There was lots of confusion, because there was no landing officer.

QUESTION: Anything further you would like to tell us?

MR. ROYOROSA: I'm ready to go back and fight again, but I don't believe too many of my people would, because they saw what happened during the invasion. The United States didn't help us, so I don't know how we're going to get back to Cuba.



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MR. ROYOROSA: I'll go again shoulder-to-shoulder with the American troops. If you try to get a lot of people together again, it will be awfully hard now, and it's going to take a lot more than a thousand men to overthrow Castro. He's very strong. The militia didn't fight well, but there were thousands. The militia were armed with good automatic rifles. However, when we got into a town, the people immediately responded with help. I think that's very important. The Cubans want to have freedom. They have to say they love Castro because they have no choice. I firmly believe that the people want to get rid of Castro.

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MR. LOPEZ

(A member of the Airborne Battalion)

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

QUESTION: Why were you against Castro?

MR. LOPEZ: I fought against Batista as a student in clandestine warfare, and I put all my hope in Castro. But a few months after Castro took over, our Western way of life changed completely. The statements of the former Cuban Air Force chief, Major Lanz pointed out Castro's intention.

MR. LOPEZ: Our advance point was about 5 kilometers beyond San Blas. On the night of D Day we were in contact with the militia all night. On the following morning we had to fall back. This was our first pull-back and it occurred on Tuesday. We had very defensible dug-in positions; however, we were taking so much fire that we had to pull back. There were lots of deficiencies in the communications system. We made our second pull-back at 3:00 PM on the 18th. We pulled back and dug in about a half of a kilometer away from the town.

QUESTION: How many men did you have at this time?

MR. LOPEZ: About 70 or 80. We had taken such heavy artillery fire during the night that we had to withdraw in the morning. We had no food or water; almost all the jumpers jumped without rations; they left them back in camp at Nicaragua.

QUESTION: Could you find any food in the towns?

MR. LOPEZ: We found some rations -- some condensed milk and some oranges. We also found some water and purified it.

QUESTION: What happened on Wednesday?

MR. LOPEZ: A small group of us were together on the road and considered falling back, but our CO said that the airborne would not pull back, and he told me and six of my buddies to advance. As we advanced, we saw a motorized column heading



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toward us and it turned out to be tanks. We had two bazookas and we knocked out the two leading tanks, but then we had no more ammunition, so we decided to try to get to the Escambray Mountains. However, we apparently went in a circle. When we got back to the road, we took over a jeep and captured one of Castro's Majors. We then headed toward the beach in the jeep and picked up some of our friends on the way, including Roberto San Roman. When we got to the beach, it was deserted and it looked like an impact area. Then we saw a boat which we went aboard and left the area.

QUESTION: What about the aluminum boats?

MR. LOPEZ: We understood that many of them had defective engines; however, we didn't take any because they were too far away.

QUESTION: Do you have any comments you would like to make?

MR. LOPEZ: I believe the training was very hard but good and that it's a shame that such hard work was lost. Next time, it will be better.

QUESTION: Are you ready to return?

MR. LOPEZ: As a Cuban, I would return to Cuba with a rock. I feel more obligated than ever to return.

MR. BETANCOURT

(The air liaison officer with the Second Battalion at Red Beach.)

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

QUESTION: When did you go to the camp?

MR. BETANCOURT: 6 January.

QUESTION: Had you had any previous military training?

MR. BETANCOURT: No.

QUESTION: How was the training?

MR. BETANCOURT: I thought the military training was very good. I had infantry training first, then communications, and then I was made the air liaison officer of the Battalion.

QUESTION: Did you have any trouble in the camp? Were there agitators?

MR. BETANCOURT: When you have a group of people, there are always a lot of people who would like to be leaders, and they're not. There were a number who wanted these positions for both personal and political reasons. Many of these people were doctors and they wanted positions when we went back to Cuba.

I think this was one reason why they were causing the trouble.

QUESTION: What ship were you on?

MR. BETANCOURT: The HUSTON. I'd like to talk about the landing. We had nine landing boats with outboard motors. Only two worked and at the end, only one worked, so it was terrible. It took the first landing craft 20 minutes to get to the beach, and there were only 9 men in the first landing.

QUESTION: Did you notice whether the boats worked when you took off from Nicaragua?

MR. BETANCOURT: I wasn't there.

QUESTION: The men who manned the boats, had they ever used them before?

MR. BETANCOURT: Yes, they were taken out of a training camp for that purpose so I imagine they operated the boats.



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MR. BETANCOURT: We didn't think they were the right type of boats for a landing. They looked like speed boats for water skiing. But anyway, we landed the Second Battalion except for one squad. At 6 o'clock in the morning, the first plane came in. The first time they hit the boat was about 6 o'clock. About 7 o'clock I was transferred to the front lines and they were being attacked by the enemy.

QUESTION: Were these attacks local militia?

MR. BETANCOURT: No, these were not local militia -- we had taken care of them.

QUESTION: Did you have a paratroop group out ahead of you?

MR. BETANCOURT: No. However, shortly after I arrived at the front, we were being hit from the area where the parachutes were coming down. We kept fighting practically all day until about one or two o'clock that afternoon.

QUESTION: Was this the Second Battalion?

MR. BETANCOURT: Yes.

QUESTION: How did the invasion force fight?

MR. BETANCOURT: They were courageous; they just kept going and going.

QUESTION: How about the Castro people?

MR. BETANCOURT: They fired, but I don't believe they were as well trained as we were. We could tell that. Our commanders were extremely good. At two or three o'clock the militia's first tanks came in and we asked for air support, and they gave air support and it was very good. After the air attack, they went away. Out of 1,000 militia, they killed 700 - 800.

QUESTION: Were your communications good?

MR. BETANCOURT: Yes, very good, with the airplanes.

QUESTION: Could they get off the road in that country?

MR. BETANCOURT: Yes. It wasn't swampy in this area.

Later on, there were some more tanks coming in, so we called again for air support. They came in and did a terrific job and that was the last air support we received. At 3:00 AM Tuesday morning, I went to headquarters.

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QUESTION: Where was your Battalion Headquarters?

MR. BETANCOURT: At the beach. By the time I arrived the situation wasn't too good. There were a lot of tanks coming down that road from the north. Everything came down the road from the north.

QUESTION: How about the Fifth Battalion?

MR. BETANCOURT: None of them ever got to Red Beach from the HUSTON.

QUESTION: Do you know the reason about this?

MR. BETANCOURT: We were told that panic was created in the boat when the planes attacked the ship.

The executive of the Brigade talked with the CO and told him we needed help; that we were running out of ammo. The second time we talked with the Battalion CO, he was ashore.

QUESTION: Was the Fifth Battalion Commander captured?

MR. BETANCOURT: Yes, I believe he was.

QUESTION: Am I correct that the Fifth Battalion had less training than all the rest?

MR. BETANCOURT: Yes, that's correct.

QUESTION: What was your ammunition situation at the end of D Day?

MR. BETANCOURT: It was very bad.

QUESTION: What did you have when you got ashore?

MR. BETANCOURT: We had our initial combat loads. The company of the Fourth Battalion attached to us with heavy weapons had some ammo for the mortars and the bazookas, and 50 calibre machine guns. We also had one armored truck with a 50 calibre machine gun on top.

QUESTION: How many tanks did you have up there?

MR. BETANCOURT: At that time, we had one tank.

QUESTION: How did that work out?

MR. BETANCOURT: It did very well.

QUESTION: How did it get up there?

MR. BETANCOURT: It came up by road from Blue Beach.



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QUESTION: What happened during the night of D Day?

MR. BETANCOURT: We were under fire from 105 artillery starting at about 6 o'clock at night.

QUESTION: What kind of observation did they have?

MR. BETANCOURT: They had a plane, and they had three forward observers.

QUESTION: What direction was the artillery fire coming from?

MR. BETANCOURT: We knew the artillery was placed in a rough place because their artillery was moving when it was fired.

QUESTION: What else happened that night?

MR. BETANCOURT: They kept firing at us until very early the next morning. On Tuesday, the 18th, we moved to Blue Beach at about 9 o'clock in the morning, because we knew there were lots of tanks and militia coming in and we couldn't hold them.

QUESTION: Did you have enough transportation?

MR. BETANCOURT: We managed. We moved the whole Battalion down the road.

QUESTION: What was your force at that time?

MR. BETANCOURT: At that time we had about 20 casualties and 180 other men. We had 5 to 8 killed.

QUESTION: Was the shortage of ammunition the reason you had to withdraw?

MR. BETANCOURT: No. We were short of ammunition, but even if you had a lot of ammunition you couldn't hold, because we needed air support.

QUESTION: When did you arrive at Blue Beach?

MR. BETANCOURT: I got to Blue Beach around 9 o'clock and the whole Battalion was there by 10:30.

QUESTION: What was the situation at Blue Beach?

MR. BETANCOURT: We had a couple of hours of rest at Blue Beach.

QUESTION: Were there any troops north of the road when you came down?

MR. BETANCOURT: Yes, there were some people of the Fourth Battalion between Red and Blue Beach.

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MR. BETANCOURT: Things were quiet for awhile, then we were hit by Castro's Air Force. Following this we were told to turn around and go back to Red Beach.

QUESTION: Why did they tell you to do that?

MR. BETANCOURT: Because we had obtained additional ammunition, we were reinforced with troops, and two tanks were attached to us, so we started back to Red Beach at about 1300 or 1400. We didn't quite make it, however. We ran into the enemy about two-thirds of the way up and they had plenty of tanks and we couldn't go any further.

MR. BETANCOURT: At this time, I was moved back to Brigade Headquarters. However, the Battalion stayed in position just south of Red Beach and fell back gradually as they were forced back.

QUESTION: When did you get to Brigade Headquarters?

MR. BETANCOURT: I'd say around 5 or 6 o'clock on that second day.

QUESTION: What was the situation at the Brigade Headquarters?

MR. BETANCOURT: A lot of people were calling for ammo and air support.

QUESTION: At the end of the second day, will you tell us where the Second Battalion was?

MR. BETANCOURT: About two-thirds of the way from Blue moving towards Red Beach.

QUESTION: What about the ammunition situation at the end of the second day?

MR. BETANCOURT: Very bad.

QUESTION: Could you tell us about the air drops the night before?

MR. BETANCOURT: I only saw one. It was very poor. They dropped nine chutes and we only recovered one.

QUESTION: Anything else you can comment on at the end of D+1? Were there any casualties around the beach? Did you see any of the surgeons around?



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MR. BETANCOURT: Yes, there were some casualties and I saw a few surgeons around.

QUESTION: What about food? What had you been eating?

MR. BETANCOURT: I didn't eat anything. They had food and water but I wasn't hungry.

QUESTION: Did you see the Brigade Commander at the Headquarters.

MR. BETANCOURT: Yes, I stayed with him from two o'clock in the morning until six o'clock operating the radio asking for air support and ammunition.

QUESTION: Will you tell us about Wednesday?

MR. BETANCOURT: They started very early Wednesday, hitting us with artillery.

QUESTION: Where was it coming from?

MR. BETANCOURT: It was coming out of the column coming down from the north.

MR. BETANCOURT: I was with San Roman until 6 o'clock Wednesday morning, and then I moved back with the rest of my Battalion. We had to destroy one of the radios that we used to talk with the airplanes, and one was broken. So from Wednesday on, most of the communications were by messenger.

QUESTION: When did you last see the Brigade Commander?

MR. BETANCOURT: At 11 or 12 o'clock. I went back to the Headquarters at 5 o'clock, but I think they left about four.

QUESTION: What boats were on the beach when you first came back? I'm trying to find out what happened to those aluminum boats that were at Blue Beach.

MR. BETANCOURT: When I got to Blue Beach, the only boats I saw were the little row boats and a couple of big landing craft, but I don't think they were operable.

QUESTION: At 5 o'clock you went back and saw the Brigade Headquarters was not there. Were you in contact with the enemy at that time?

MR. BETANCOURT: Yes.

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QUESTION: Was there anybody out in front of you?

MR. BETANCOURT: I think a Battalion was still out there.

QUESTION: What was your ammo situation at this time?

MR. BETANCOURT: We were out of ammo for the 81 mortar; for the 42s, for the bazooka, for the 50 and 30 calibre machine guns.

QUESTION: You essentially didn't have anything but rifle ammunition?

MR. BETANCOURT: That's right. We didn't have anything.

QUESTION: What was happening on that road coming down on the north? Did anybody ever come down on the road from the east?

MR. BETANCOURT: Yes, I was told there was another front line there.

QUESTION: What happened from 5 o'clock on?

MR. BETANCOURT: There was no one at Brigade Headquarters. There were only about 15 or 20 people left at Blue Beach. There were no high ranking officers to ask what we should do, so we walked toward the beach. Five of us got together and we saw a little row boat. So we got on the little boat and rowed with our hands. When we got off the beach, we saw another boat with 8 of our people in it. Then an aircraft came over and killed all 8 of the people in the other boat; they fired at us but didn't hit us. By this time, I'd say it was about 6 o'clock in the evening.

QUESTION: Was that the only boat you saw, the one with the 8 men in it?

MR. BETANCOURT: No, we saw a couple of other boats. The next day at about 5:30 we drifted down to one of the keys. We were later picked up by a destroyer. We were on one of the keys for 4 days; we had three coconuts. We also ate some crabs.

QUESTION: What about water?

MR. BETANCOURT: We drank a little salt water, and rotten water from the swamp.



QUESTION: Was there any talk, when it appeared things were becoming critical, of going guerrilla?

MR. BETANCOURT: Not that I know of.

QUESTION: During your training, was there any talk of this?

MR. BETANCOURT: No.

QUESTION: Do you have any comments you would like to make?

MR. BETANCOURT: Yes. The initial plan called for three air strikes -- the 15th, the 16th, and the 17th. The 15th, there was an air strike, but then there was an order to stop the rest of the air strikes. We had to have these air strikes because they were supposed to take care of the air fields and the tanks -- maybe not 100% but quite a bit, so actually the success of this invasion was based on those air strikes. That was the initial plan, so why didn't they tell us we couldn't carry on with the invasion because the air strikes were stopped. They could have told us and we could have gone back to the point of departure.

RESPONSE: We know the D-2 strikes were quite successful but not entirely successful.

MR. BETANCOURT: We knew the success of the Brigade depended on the success of the air strikes; otherwise, it's just like sending a bunch of human beings to get killed.

MR. BETANCOURT: Well, there's no point in asking why the American jet airplanes didn't help us. They could have very well. They could have been our planes as far as we were concerned. We could have arranged to take all the insignia off.

There are many things I don't understand about political affairs and so on, but I don't think the United States knows how to fight the Communists. You can't go by the books. Sometimes you have to throw away the book to fight. There's only one way to fight those people and that's by fighting them the way they fight. You cannot fight them by talking. You cannot fight with conferences. Look at what's happening in Laos. In my opinion, Laos is completely lost.

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QUESTION: There was some comment as to whether the force could be turned back. If they had been ordered to turn around and go back because there were no air strikes, do you think that Pepe would have turned around and gone back?

MR. BETANCOURT: We could have delayed the invasion.

QUESTION: Do you think he would have responded?

MR. BETANCOURT: I couldn't answer that question. That's not the point. The point is that the order never came in. If he had taken the order and not responded to it, that would have been his responsibility.

QUESTION: Any other comments?

MR. BETANCOURT: Yes, as far as I'm concerned, I'm willing to help anyway I can. I think we fight a common cause. It's not just Cuban against Cuban -- it's throughout the world.



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By JK NARS, Date 6/23/78

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18 May 1961 - Seventeenth Meeting

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Natl. Archives Review Committee, 6/21/78  
By JF NARS, Date 6/22/78

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## MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

### PARAMILITARY STUDY GROUP MEETING

#### AT THE PENTAGON

#### SEVENTEENTH MEETING

18 MAY 1961

#### PRESENT

GENERAL TAYLOR

MR. KENNEDY

MR. DULLES

ADMIRAL BURKE

GENERAL LEONITZER

MR. VARONA

MR. RAY

MR. KING

COMMANDER MITCHELL

LT COLONEL TARMATER



GENERAL LEHMITZER

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

GENERAL LEHMITZER: The thing I would like to say at the very beginning is that I consider the JCS role was one of appraisal, evaluation, offering of constructive criticism, and assisting CIA in looking at the training and detailed plans. Defense participated in the role of support.

QUESTION: What action was taken on the over-all U.S. plan of action for Cuba developed by the JCS in late January?

GENERAL LEHMITZER: Well, we prepared a plan of action for Cuba and forwarded it to the Secretary of Defense. There's some question of what happened to it up in the Office of the Secretary of Defense. I did discuss it with Dean Rusk and Mr. Dulles at one of the high level Governmental meetings on the 22nd of January. Several attempts were made by General Gray, at his level, to interest State and CIA in preparing a national plan based on the TRINIDAD concept. State was pretty receptive, but the people at CIA were not quite as receptive because they were involved in planning this operation and were already pretty well under way, as a result of a previous decision taken way back in March 17, 1960.

QUESTION: What was the JCS view of the military feasibility of TRINIDAD and ZAPATA?

GENERAL LEHMITZER: Well, TRINIDAD first. Assuming control of the air, we felt that the landing could be effective against a light opposition which was the most that was anticipated in that area, but like all other considerations, the ultimate effect centered upon the uprisings that would be generated throughout the islands and the reinforcements which would be gravitating toward this particular beachhead.

QUESTION: Control of the air -- what did that mean to you?

GENERAL LEHMITZER: It meant that the air plan would succeed in knocking out the limited facilities available to Castro.

QUESTION: 100%?

[REDACTED]

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Not 100%, but a great majority of the aircraft.

QUESTION: How could you deal with any remaining aircraft, since you had only B-26s?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: It was expected that the initial strikes would be generally successful, since Castro's aircraft were concentrated on several fields. Following the initial strike, it would be a matter of matching the aircraft that were allocated to this plan against what remained of Castro's aircraft.

QUESTION: In recurring strikes thereafter?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: That's right. We didn't intend to stop with just the strike on D-Day.

QUESTION: It seems to me that several times there was a confidence in 100% control of the air and this just never happens.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I never heard of a 100% success. On the other hand, you didn't have too many aircraft, and if we did some of the things that were anticipated and one important thing that I haven't heard discussed, the question of the diversionary landing has not received the attention that it deserves. Having been involved in this type of operation during the war, we always put great stress on diverting the enemy. This was a very important part of the Cuba plan but, unfortunately, it didn't go. When you only have one diversionary attack to attract the enemy's attention to another area and it doesn't get in, this is very detrimental to the over-all success of the plan.

STATEMENT: There was a feeling that a 100% job would be done on Castro's air force, which just doesn't happen.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I wouldn't go along with the idea that there was a feeling there would be 100% success in any kind of an operation.

7 STATEMENT: This is [REDACTED] reply to a message: "Since the plan called for the destruction of Castro's aircraft, there seemed to be no point in putting anti-aircraft guns on the ships."

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I inquired as to what machine guns, or anti-aircraft equipment they had aboard the ships, and they mentioned the 50 caliber guns, and so on, and this seemed reasonable for the type operation that was envisaged.

QUESTION: Did the Chiefs approve LAPATA?



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GENERAL LEMNITZER: I don't regard our actions as approval as such - I'd like to make clear that we have supported the thing, but we didn't consider that it was within our purview to approve the plan. However, we did believe the plan was feasible, therefore, the plan was all right to go.

QUESTION: Was there any question about the feasibility of the plan in your mind?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: The guerrilla aspects of the TRINIDAD Plan were much more obtainable than the ZAPATA Plan. We felt that in the ZAPATA Plan the same importance was attached to the whole air operation to the extent that the landing could be effected and the beachhead held for a period of time, but there again the success of this plan was dependent upon the full gravitation of guerrilla forces to the beach area.

QUESTION: The ultimate success, or were uprisings a pre-condition to getting ashore?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: No, not for getting ashore. Ultimate success would be determined by the invasion serving as a catalyst for further action on the part of the anti-Castro guerrillas or elements throughout Cuba.

QUESTION: By ultimate success, do you mean the overthrow of Castro?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Yes. I never did count on an indefinite maintenance of this beachhead. When you get committed to a beach, the question of ultimate success depends on whether you can pump in resources faster than the enemy can build up around you. I think we generally believed that the establishment of the beachhead would constitute a trigger to set off a series of other events. It was never intended that this entire force would lodge themselves on the beach and maintain themselves there indefinitely since there were no reinforcements coming in.

QUESTION: Was it anticipated that the military would be able to land in force on the beachhead and maintain the beachhead for a period of time?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: That is correct, and if the enemy forces built up faster than they had planned, they would go into the Escambray Mountains under the TRINIDAD Plan.

QUESTION: How about ZAPATA?

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GENERAL LEWITZER: It didn't stand out so loud and clear, but nevertheless the same general type of ultimate action was contemplated. There were three alternatives in ZAPATA, after they got on the beach, if it looked as though the uprising would not occur. First, we were in a guerrilla type country. Second, the Escambrays were quite a long way away, but they could be used as a guerrilla base. Third, if we succeeded in getting rid of most of the enemy air, the force could have been withdrawn and reassembled for possibly another type of attack somewhere else.

QUESTION: Do you think they could have been withdrawn without overt U.S. support?

GENERAL LEWITZER: I didn't regard this as a single beachhead. This particular plan never involved a 36-mile beachhead with 1400 men -- that would be absurd. Green Beach and Red Beach and Blue Beach were small lodgments that never involved a continuous perimeter.

STATEMENT: In talking to a lot of the operators I find that they felt that they really had impassable obstacles and that anyone coming into the area had to come down the roads.

GENERAL LEWITZER: That is correct. There was no intention that the beachhead would include this whole area.

QUESTION: With regard to the question of being in guerrilla territory, was any independent study made?

GENERAL LEWITZER: Well, so far as I was concerned, I didn't go beyond the information we got from the CIA and from my own staff, that this was an area in which the guerrillas had operated for over 100 years.

STATEMENT: I think this was considered guerrilla territory about 100 years ago and then about 60 years ago, but not recently.

GENERAL LEWITZER: There are few people living in it and few roads, and so on.

STATEMENT: There is no place in which you can maintain yourself in that swamp.



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GENERAL LEMNITZER: I suppose the same thing could be said about the Escambray Mountains. I'd like to make clear that we did not like this area as well as the TRINIDAD area, and one of the reasons was that it was more difficult to break out of there.

STATEMENT: You mention the preference for TRINIDAD -- I'm not sure whether you're aware of it, but the Secretary of Defense apparently never appreciated that point. In fact, he had the impression that the Chiefs thought that ZAPATA was the better of the two plans.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I just don't understand how he got that impression. I can show you in my notes on two accounts where I called it to his attention. We also put it in writing that "of the alternate plans, alternative three is considered the most feasible and likely to accomplish the objective. None of the alternates involved are as feasible and likely to accomplish the objectives as the present paramilitary plan." I don't see how you can say it any clearer than that.

STATEMENT: I think it's just a question of too many papers and being confused.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I'd like to go back to your question about guerrilla territory. This ZAPATA area is not much different from that in Vietnam, where they're having the devil's own time chasing the guerrillas through the swamps.

STATEMENT: There are several problems. First, in comparison with the area in Vietnam, there isn't an expanse where these people could move. This is more limited. Furthermore, the towns and villages are on the outside where the invasion forces couldn't reach. The second problem is that these people were never trained or told that they were supposed to become guerrillas.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I don't agree with that because they were trained as guerrillas for 9 months.

STATEMENT: That was until November, 1960. There were only about 300 of them at that time, but then the great influx of about 1,000 came in after that time, and the great influx never received any instruction in guerrilla training.

[REDACTED]

GENERAL LEMNITZER: It was our understanding of the plan without any doubt that moving into the guerrilla phase was one of the important elements of the plan, and any idea that the Chiefs considered that they were making an indefinite lodgment on the beachhead is not right. Every bit of information that we were able to gather from the CIA was that the guerrilla aspects were always considered as a main element of the plan.

QUESTION: What I can't understand is when it was presented to the Joint Chiefs of Staff, why didn't it receive a great deal of attention?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: That was regarded as one of the alternatives if they weren't successful.

STATEMENT: General, if you look at that area and talk with anybody who has been there, you couldn't possibly become guerrillas in that damn place.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I don't see why not.

STATEMENT: Where are you going to get the water and the food? It's not like Vietnam. They sent helicopters over and shot all these people down.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: In Vietnam, for example, they don't get any food. They sustain themselves in an area just like this.

STATEMENT: As I understood it, they did, that's why they put the wire around the villages.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: They put the wire around the villages to keep the food in, but there was also the possibility that these fellows would establish themselves as guerrillas in the Escambray Mountains or in the swamps and they would receive air drops.

ADMIRAL BURKE: Guerrillas couldn't sustain themselves in any of these areas until they got support from the populace. Supplies would have to be carried in to them until they received support from the populace.

STATEMENT: The President had the same impression that you did -- that if worst came to worst, this group could become guerrillas, but as we've gotten into it, it's become obvious that this possibility never really existed.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Then we were badly misinformed.



STATEMENT: Without training and instruction, they would never have gone guerrilla.

MR. DULLES: I wouldn't wholly buy that. These people had a cadre of leaders - 20% to 30% would be the leaders. They knew about guerrilla warfare. The guerrillas in World War II never had any training until they got into a guerrilla operation.

GENERAL GRAY: It was always considered that the most feasible action was withdrawal from the beach by sea. This came up at one White House meeting when Mr. Bissell made the statement, that if we do have to pull out, the best course of action would be to withdraw from the beach.

STATEMENT: But they had no plan to withdraw by sea. They had no capability to withdraw by sea, except as provided by the U.S. Navy.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Well, it's a question of the time of withdrawal.

STATEMENT: It still isn't clear to me how you're going to get them off if you wait until they are buttoned down on the beaches.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Certainly as far as withdrawals are concerned, and I said this many times when the operation was on, the most difficult operation in the world is the withdrawal under enemy pressure from a beachhead. But that was not the kind of withdrawal that was anticipated, as far as I was concerned.

QUESTION: That's the picture that shaped up and that's one of the unhappy aspects of the picture. Let's go back to TRINIDAD. The JCS said that TRINIDAD had a fair chance of success. What was your estimate of the feasibility of ZAPATA?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Still feasible, but less so than TRINIDAD. We considered ZAPATA feasible. I could put words together and say that we said that TRINIDAD had a fair chance and that ZAPATA had less than a fair chance, but actually we felt that ZAPATA had a fair chance but of a lower grade than TRINIDAD.

QUESTION: If the Chiefs had had any question as to feasibility, the Chiefs would have spoken up. Is that a fair statement?

[REDACTED]

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I'm sure they would.

QUESTION: To what extent had the Chiefs made a personal study of the final operations plan?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: The final operations plan was received two days prior the final D-Day and it was too late for a personal study. Portions of ZAPATA were proposed on four occasions and approved on the basis of explanations that we got from the working group.

GENERAL TAYLOR: Is it fair to say that you gave it de facto approval on a piecemeal basis?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: No other solution was feasible at that time. The rainy season was approaching and one thing that I would like to mention here was the fact that they had 100 MIG pilots being trained in Czechoslovakia, and we didn't know when they were going to be returned, and our thinking was strongly influenced by this fact.

QUESTION: Was any discussion given as to what would happen if a few MIGs appeared?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: No, all we could do was to go on the basis of the information we had that the MIGs had not yet arrived. We also felt that if this operation was going to go, it should go before Castro received two Soviet destroyers that we understood were being delivered.

QUESTION: What would have happened if you had had a couple of MIGs there at the time?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Their appearance would have pretty well complicated the operation.

QUESTION: Were any steps taken in order to prepare for that possibility?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: None, other than the possibility that you might go to the Navy and ask the Navy for overt support, but that was very unlikely.

QUESTION: What was the Chiefs' view on the suitability of the terrain?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: We discussed that somewhat. It was considered not as suitable as TRINIDAD for the reasons that I indicated. Their success depended upon their ability to seize the approaches to the swamp areas. Now the size of



[REDACTED]

of the beachhead question was emphasized before. There was a plan to put lodgments in the entry ways into the swamp area. The size of the area was dictated by the necessity of protecting the airfields, and to prevent access to the swamp. The large area wasn't considered desirable but acceptable if the approaches were held and control of the air was established.

STATEMENT: When you commented on ZAPATA the first time, the air plan was for D-Day strikes only, but with no limitations.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: That's correct.

STATEMENT: Later there were limited strikes on D-2 and limited strikes on D-Day. Would you comment on this watering down of the air plan? Were the Chiefs satisfied with this?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: The D-2 strikes were added for non-military reasons. We would have preferred to do without the D-2 air strikes. They were never intended to accomplish the destruction of the Castro air force. They were to lend plausibility to the story that the D-Day strikes had been launched from within Cuba.

QUESTION: Did you object to the D-2 air strikes?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: No, we did not object. We would have preferred not to have them, but for non-military reasons they were considered to be of great importance and they were approved.

STATEMENT: They could have been quite disastrous because they could have alerted Castro and he could have dispersed his aircraft.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Yes, but he didn't.

STATEMENT: Yes, but that was just luck.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Yes, but here again you get into the old battle of getting into an operation of this kind covertly, political and psychological considerations against military considerations. My conclusion here is, which I'll explain a little bit later, you have to be very careful about diluting military considerations in order to attain non-attribution and non-association with the United States.

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QUESTION: Do you feel that you or the Joint Chiefs were the defenders of the military aspects of the operation, or was CIA?

GENERAL LEWITZER: The defenders of the military parts of the plan were the people who produced it and that was CIA. We were providing assistance, and assuring the feasibility of the plan.

GENERAL TAYLOR: What led to the idea that it was necessary to maintain that all of the air strikes emanated from Cuba?

GENERAL LEWITZER: We were strong for the TRINIDAD Plan. However, about the middle of March during a meeting at the White House, Mr. Mann was gravely concerned about the impact throughout the Latin American area of these air strikes coming from outside of Cuba. He hammered at the point repeatedly and wanted to know if there wasn't some area in Cuba where they could land on a ready-made area. At the conclusion of this meeting CIA was directed to review the whole idea and come up with alternative landing areas other than TRINIDAD, because TRINIDAD didn't have the kind of airstrip that was required to provide plausibility to the story that the aircraft had come from within Cuba. This was an important consideration.

QUESTION: Was this approved beyond Mann?

GENERAL LEWITZER: He was the one who expressed the views. I don't know how much Secretary Rusk or any of the other people were involved. As a matter of fact, it was a disappointment to me, because I thought we had a plan that had been thoroughly worked out and hated to see another delay and another complete evaluation of the island. It caused some concern both in my own group and in CIA. On March 16, when we had another meeting and were discussing the ZAPATA Plan, Mr. Mann liked the ZAPATA Plan because of the airfield and indicated that it provided us with a plausible denial. I indicated that the JCS had gone over the alternatives and didn't think that any of them were as good as the original TRINIDAD Plan, but of the three to be considered, ZAPATA was the most achievable. Then I said this, that it was not clear to me why ZAPATA was any more acceptable from the political point of view than the TRINIDAD Plan. Whereupon Mr. Mann replied that it gave plausible denial to the launching of air



[REDACTED]

operations from outside Cuba. He said we needed a facade behind which we could deny that these attacks came out of the United States, Guatemala, or Nicaragua.

QUESTION: Why were they so sensitive about the fair name of Guatemala and Nicaragua?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Well, his concern was how much this particular operation might upset or antagonize the other Latin American nations by doing violence to one of the members of the OAS. He was deeply worried about the impact of this type operation conducted with our support and assistance which he felt was generally known, and he was especially worried about the air aspects of the plan.

QUESTION: With regard to the D-2 and the D-Day air strikes both of which were to be limited, did the Joint Chiefs feel they had an adequate plan?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I won't say they regarded it as adequate; it was a reasonable air plan. I'd like to point out that the D-2 air strike was never expected to wipe out Castro's entire force. It was the D-Day strike which was the important one. The D-Day strike involved fragmentation bombs, napalm, 50 caliber machine guns. This was an all-out effort and one of the critical aspects of the whole operation. The air plans for TRINIDAD and ZAPATA were the same. They were the same for the reason that the targets were identical. In the examination of the ZAPATA Plan, we were merely looking at the location of the landing. The same number of aircraft were on the three essential airfields and the air plan was not considered to be affected at all as far as the D-Day strikes were concerned.

STATEMENT: I would like to make two points: First, there were three plans considered and the objection to one of the plans was the fact that the air strip wasn't adequate. That same objection was not made in connection with the ZAPATA Plan. The second thing is that the ZAPATA Plan as it was originally considered, anticipated capturing this airport and then have the planes take off from the airport.

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GENERAL LEMNITZER: No, sir. That's wrong.

STATEMENT: I'm just going by what the paper says.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Are you saying that these aircraft were supposed to fly from Nicaragua and then land and load up and take off and bomb and so on?

STATEMENT: I don't know. I wasn't there.

GENERAL GRAY: I think it's wrong to base that whole ZAPATA Plan on one paper because this was just the first cut at the ZAPATA Plan. After that the ZAPATA Plan was considered again and again over a period of time, and all this became very clear as it went on.

STATEMENT: Yes, I understand, but we're just talking about the beginning. The important thing is that you didn't turn one plan down because of the air strike situation, and yet you did turn another plan down because the air strike situation wasn't adequate. You didn't turn ZAPATA down because the air strikes weren't considered adequate, and yet the air strikes consisted of taking off after dawn.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I didn't think there was any material change in the air plan. The targets were the same regardless of where you'd land. On D-Day the air plan involved going after the Cuban air force; thereafter, they would take under attack any movements of troops to the area and they would attempt to knock out microwave communications stations on which the Cuban national communications were largely dependent.

QUESTION: What did you think would happen if you weren't 100% successful and didn't get a couple of T-33s?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: In war, you never expect 100% success. However, a couple of T-33s are not going to be decisive elements in an operation of this kind.

QUESTION: Were there any comments or discussion about the T-33s in particular?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I think I had information that they were armed, because we had been trying to get some kind of equipment against the Pathet Lao



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

and we were considering what the distribution of T-33s was around the world. We saw that some of them had been armed as reconnaissance planes and it was suspected that the Cuban air force had armed theirs - but they weren't bombers.

STATEMENT: Yes, but they hit targets.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Yes, but the T-33s didn't sink any ships.

STATEMENT: Yes, they did.

STATEMENT: No, not the T-33s. I think they were Sea Furies. A Sea Fury was the one that hit the RIO.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I have a long list of the reasons why we preferred TRINIDAD to ZAPATA: It was more distant from Havana, the closeness to the Escambray Mountains, there was only one access road into the area, the nearest Cuban army unit of any size was 100 miles away, and considerable support from dissidents was expected in that area.

QUESTION: What was the understanding of the importance of control of the air?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Absolutely vital to success.

QUESTION: Were the Chiefs satisfied with the plan of pre-D-Day strikes?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: We first talked about some strikes on the day before D-Day, but the D-Day strikes were regarded as critical. We were particularly interested in napalm, or I was, because I've seen the effects of napalm on aircraft when they're parked close together; also fragmentation bombs. Of course, elimination of the D-Day strike greatly eliminated the insurance against attack from the Cuban air force.

QUESTION: Were the Joint Chiefs of Staff involved in the cancellation of the D-Day air strikes?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: They were not. It came as a surprise to me.

QUESTION: When did you hear about it?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: At 2 o'clock on the morning of the 17th of April when General Gray and General Wheeler came to my quarters on another matter. They said they had received a call from CIA urging that they get air cover for the beachhead on the 17th. It was then that I heard that they had cancelled

the D-Day air strikes. On that occasion I strongly supported putting U.S. Naval cover over the beachhead. I directed that Admiral Dennison be prepared to provide this cover. However, I recognized the major political implications involved and directed General Wheeler and General Gray to consult with the Department of State on this matter.

QUESTION: Was the request for air cover an attempt to neutralize some of the effect of the cancellation of the D-Day strikes?

GENERAL LEWITZER: The way it came to me was that it was an urgent call for putting U.S. air cover over the beachhead.

STATEMENT: Maybe General Gray can tell us.

GENERAL GRAY: At the time I was called over to the CIA, it was about 1 o'clock in the morning. They informed me then that the air strikes were cancelled. Then General Cabell asked me if I would see what I could do to get air cover from the carrier. We eventually got permission for the Early Warning but not for the air cover.

QUESTION: What was the understanding of the JCS as to the action of the landing force if it effected a lodgment but no uprisings occurred?

GENERAL LEWITZER: Those were the three alternatives. Go guerrilla in the swamps; conduct guerrilla operations from the Escambray; or be withdrawn.

QUESTION: What was the understanding of the ability of the force to go guerrilla?

GENERAL LEWITZER: It might not have been ideal country but it had been used, and it was believed to be feasible guerrilla country.

QUESTION: Did the JCS examine the feasibility of this course of action?

GENERAL LEWITZER: No, no specific study. The Working Group studied the feasibility and presented it to the JCS on several occasions as being feasible.

QUESTION: What did they think of the effect of the swamp on the operation?



[REDACTED]

GENERAL LEMNITZER: We felt that it assisted defense but it was also a double-edged sword -- it aided defense but also made it more difficult to break out.

QUESTION: How did the JCS follow the course of the operation?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: The Secretary of Defense and I attended briefing sessions held in the special War Room which we set up for this operation. Then Service liaison officers, briefed their respective Chiefs with information from the War Room. There was a continual flow of information from the War Room and CIA. It came to our War Room by telephone calls, and messengers from their war room to this one.

QUESTION: There was no electronic gear?

GENERAL GRAY: Many messages came by teletype and some by phone, and then we had an officer on liaison duty with CIA.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: The Joint Staff met on the 17th and 19th of April and considered important action messages. On the 18th, Admiral Burke and I were at the White House for most of the day in conference, and we followed the operations from there. That's in general how we handled it.

QUESTION: Would you say this was satisfactory?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: If we were running the operation, no. But we were in a support role. We were primarily concerned with logistic support. We arranged a rather elaborate extensive logistic support plan. We envisioned arming a hell of a lot of Cubans if the uprisings occurred. Our logistic plan was 4 or 5 times larger than the original. The Secretary of Defense was particularly interested in being sure that they had all the support that they could possibly require.

QUESTION: What was the understanding as to the ammunition situation at the end of D+1?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Our understanding was that it was critical. However, we knew there was ammunition on the LCIs and the LCUs, and there was an air drop planned by CIA on the night of D+1.

QUESTION: There was one on D-Day night and one planned for D+1?

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GENERAL LEMNITZER: Yes.

ADMIRAL BURKE: We also tried to get some C-130s.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: That is correct. We had some C-130s over at Kelly Air Force Base but they never got into the action.

QUESTION: Did the Chairman know of the flight of the ships?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I sure did. I knew of all the attempts by CIA and CINCLANT to try and round them up.

QUESTION: What recommendations were made regarding U.S. help after D-Day?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Well, Arleigh and I were over at the White House when the question of using U.S. destroyers to pick up people off the beach was discussed. The feasibility and the need was discussed right there, and the decision was made to order them in.

ADMIRAL BURKE: We didn't know what was going on at the beach so we asked for reconnaissance, and the reconnaissance was approved.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: The afternoon or night of D-Day 4 B-26s were made available which we had been preparing for the Laos operations. Then 4 more were made available on D+1. In addition to that, we offered 5 T-33s and CIA accepted 4. On D+1 action was initiated to use C-130s in dropping ammunition on the beachhead. The aircraft were moved to Kelly, the packing crews were on their way, and the crews were set up for the drops on the night of D+1 but they never went into action.

QUESTION: Why weren't the T-33s turned over to CIA on D+1?

MR. KING: I believe it may have been a question of getting pilots. We were short of pilots by D+1.

QUESTION: When did you sense that the beachhead might be going down?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: On the morning of D+2, I made a comment to the President that this was the time for this outfit to go guerrilla.

QUESTION: How were your comments received?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I received a surprise when Mr. Bissell said they were not prepared to go guerrilla.

QUESTION: This was the first time you'd known about that?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Yes.



QUESTION: That being the case, was there any discussion that we were going to lose the war or we were going to have to use the U.S. Navy? Was it realized that they were accepting defeat if that decision wasn't made?

GENERAL LEHMITZER: I'm not sure it was put in quite those terms.

MR. KENNEDY: Could I add something? I don't think there was complete information - all the messages showing the critical situation were not transmitted to the President. However, there was general knowledge that there was a shortage of ammunition. We were told on D-Day that the ships had gone out 15 miles and they intended to come back in that night. The President had said that day that he'd rather be called an aggressor than a bum, so he was prepared to go as far as necessary to assure success, but we were always about 5 or 6 or 7 hours behind on our information. The next morning on D+1 we knew the ships hadn't come in for some reason we couldn't understand and there was a serious ammunition shortage. At this time there was no assurance whether it would be possible to hold the beachhead even if the Navy was ordered in. So at one o'clock Admiral Burke was instructed to send Navy pilots over to reconnoiter and send back a message stating whether they could maintain the beachhead. The message in reply stated there was no fighting going on, so there wasn't any point in going in that they could see. The next morning there was a message saying the beach had collapsed and they wanted to evacuate the men, so the President gave the order for the destroyers to go in, but by this time it was impossible to evacuate the men because the beachhead wasn't large enough, so then it was too late to do anything.

GENERAL LEHMITZER: It wasn't just the question of committing U.S. forces and saving the war -- it wasn't that simple. It was a question of whether or not the Navy could save it if you sent them in.

MR. KENNEDY: We didn't have any idea what the situation was there. The President said he used to walk around on that White House lawn thinking he'd like to do something if he knew what was going on.

GENERAL LEHMITZER: This is just like all actions. The Commander didn't have the kind of information that he'd like to have had.

QUESTION: What we're talking about is the difficulty, in fact, the impossibility of running a military operation from Washington. Was this ever recognized during the preliminary considerations?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: The difficulty is that no Commander could have made these decisions down there because these were decisions to commit the U.S., and the only place that decision could be made was right here by the Commander-in-Chief. No matter where you had your command ship, you would still have to get the decision out of Washington because this was a decision to commit U.S. forces.

STATEMENT: That's very true. But I thought you might have a number of representatives of different Departments on a first-class ship with first-class communications.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: But you would still have to rely on communications from the beach.

STATEMENT: The men on the BLAGAR had a pretty good picture of what was taking place, but that picture never was transmitted up here.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: That's certainly correct.

QUESTION: Were the JCS satisfied to have CIA conduct this operation?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: As far as we were concerned, the job was a covert operation and the JCS couldn't legally conduct a covert operation.

GENERAL TAYLOR: I couldn't find that you or anybody else ever raised the question whether or not CIA should have run this operation.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: This thing started back in March of 1960, when this assignment of responsibility was made. I didn't get into it until many months after all of this had been decided.

M.R. DULLES: I think some JCS representative was at that meeting at the White House.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I don't know. I wasn't Chairman at that time. Maybe Tate was there. I was not there and I didn't know a thing about it, but nevertheless there were lots of times when various people indicated that this was something the military ought to run. But again it was a question of the disassociation of the United States.



QUESTION: Well, the JCS could have been just as dis-associated as CIA was?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: How could you?

STATEMENT: Didn't you turn over the training of these people to people from Defense? The only difference would be the responsibility for the execution of the plan.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: That's one of the things we have to look at in the United States Government right now. Are we going to run this thing on a covert basis - I think we were trapped by words, by covert.

QUESTION: Do you agree that an operation can be covert and still be conducted by Defense?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Yes, we can. We've conducted some. I think you can do it with CIA provided you provide them with the military staff that they need.

STATEMENT: I think they had a lot of staff and they had what they needed.

MR. DULLES: I thought we did. We had 38 trainers down in Guatemala that you supplied.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: Yes, we did.

QUESTION: We would like to get your views on how you think paramilitary operations should be conducted in principle. Should we make the decision that covert operations of this sort be assigned to Defense?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I think the answer to this question depends upon the size, the magnitude of the operation that is involved.

STATEMENT: General Lemnitzer, we would appreciate it if you would take the time to give us your ideas on where the line should be drawn with regard to covert operations.

GENERAL LEMNITZER: I don't see how you can have covert activities by armed forces. I think it's a contradiction in terms. We can have military people that are sheep-dipped and put them in an operation of this kind. But you can't just take any officer and say he's going to be sheep-dipped unless he volunteers for it. He has family problems. The military would have a hell of a time contracting these people.

QUESTION: But there was no question of transferring it -- no suggestion?

GENERAL LEMNITZER: No.

QUESTION: What is your view of the accuracy of the evaluation of the effectiveness of Castro's force?

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GENERAL LEWITZER: The evaluation of the Navy was accurate; the air force, fairly accurate -- it was inaccurate as to pilots' capabilities, and also regarding the guns on the T-33s; concerning the army, I would say that the information was not accurate. My information was that most of the tanks were up around the Havana area, and how they moved their tanks down there that fast without having some in that area, I don't know and I haven't been able to get into it because I've been away, but I would say the navy information was accurate; the air force, fairly accurate; and the army and the militia not too accurate in terms of reaction time and capability.

QUESTION: What impression did the JCS have of the likelihood of an uprising?

GENERAL LEWITZER: We had no information. We went on CIA's analysis and it was reported that there was a good prospect. I remember Dick Bissell, evaluating this for the President, indicated there was sabotage, bombings, and there were also various groups that were asking or begging for arms and so forth. All they needed were arms and equipment, and the impression that we got was somewhat over-optimistic; particularly in light of measures that Castro took.

QUESTION: Can defeat be properly attributed to any deficiency in the intelligence?

GENERAL LEWITZER: I would say only to a degree. For example, the estimates of the possibility of the population rising up, and I don't think we estimated the effectiveness of Castro's control of the people.

QUESTION: May I just mention the attitude most of us have on that now. This is related to the fact that no call to rise was given, and that this was withheld until they could be sure that these people had someplace to go for support, so the idea of the uprising was never really tried.

GENERAL LEWITZER: I've seen all kinds of reports about the number of people they've put under arrest, in the stockades and so forth, which would have certainly inhibited any uprising.

QUESTION: How should a paramilitary operation be fitted into Governmental machinery?



[REDACTED]

QUESTION: Then this Group would take any new proposals to the President direct?

MR. DULLES: If it was of the consequence that the Secretary of State or Gordon Gray thought it should go to the President. Often we would pass on an operation without going to the President.

COLONEL BLACK: That's about all I can contribute to the actual Cuba exercise, as such. I should say also that I am speaking for myself, Colonel Black. I haven't checked this out with my boss. It seems to me that the principal lessons are these: First, we can't do it with mirrors; I have a feeling that we are trying to do very significant things in the struggle against the Communist power without really going all the way. We are trying to do it with some trick or gimmick. Second, I don't think personally from my work here in Washington that the United States fully understands how to use the power which we have at our disposal, that's political, military, and economic. Third, I don't think we have yet the interdepartmental structure to fight the cold war. Fourth, I think we seriously need action to halt the erosion of America's will to win. I don't think we really go into the battle against Communism to win. We go in there to hold our own and this, in turn, has a very bad effect on all our policies, on the morale of our people. Finally, I have some criteria for solution of the problem which is just basic criteria. I have them written up for your four members.

QUESTION: You mention your opinion of the inadequacy of the Governmental structure. Do you have specific suggestions?

COLONEL BLACK: We need a National Security Operations Center. This should be right in the White House. In my judgment, it can't be anywhere else. The State Department is setting up an operation center, and I'm sure the State Department will claim that any interdepartmental organization such as this should be in the State Department. I'm convinced, both from what I've seen in the field and in Washington, that you cannot effectively conduct these national security operations under the sole leadership of the State Department.



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The classic example, in my judgment, is South Viet Nam. The President, on the 20th of April, asked Mr. Gilpatric to head up a Presidential task force to try to develop a program to prevent the Communist domination of Viet Nam. It soon became apparent that the problem as the Department of State saw it was one of maintaining the primacy of State in the control of all operations overseas, rather than really focussing on the problem of defeating the Communist effort in South Viet Nam.

QUESTION: You say they are reluctant to work towards success?

COLONEL BLACK: They spend most of their time trying to make sure that the Government decision-making authority and control will be in the State Department. They went right back to their old principle that the first and essential element of the Viet Nam problem is to reform Diem; reform his government, and giving that priority over defeating the Communists. Defense has always felt that primary emphasis must be placed on finding a solution to the internal security problem, and to do that the reform of the Diem government would have to wait until you had established a reasonable degree of internal security. The State Department wants to make any additional military effort to improve the internal security program sort of a quid pro quo for instituting these internal reforms. The basic point is that the direction of this sort of thing has to be on the basis of national security rather than on foreign policy.

QUESTION: You say then that such a center should be in the White House and not in the State Department?

COLONEL BLACK: That's right. I have here a paper that sets forth the concept, and a longer paper that sets forth some argumentation.

QUESTION: When you say a center, do you mean a committee?

COLONEL BLACK: No, sir.

QUESTION: Who's in charge?



[REDACTED]

COLONEL BLACK: The President. It has to be close at hand to the White House so that he can use it whenever he wants, but it should be manned by professionals from all departments and agencies of the Government.

QUESTION: Is it simply to provide information and intelligence and that sort of thing, or is it to be an action group that checks on things and starts interdepartmental work and so on?

COLONEL BLACK: First, it gives the President up-to-the-minute intelligence; secondly, it gives him communication with which he can personally communicate to his ambassadors and to his field commanders all over the world, and it keeps him abreast of the status of approved projects and programs that have been started in the Government. It gives him, in effect, a mechanism for command supervision which I don't think he has today.

QUESTION: I don't see how he'd accomplish that.

COLONEL BLACK: In effect, he could determine from the information available in the center whether we're making any progress toward our objectives or not.

STATEMENT: Gilpatric's task force on Viet Nam seems to be symptomatic of our weakness. The present consensus is the need to pull these things together and to get a program and to follow up on it, but now they're using ad hoc methods with a task force committee limiting their scope to one particular country which can't be considered by itself, in my opinion. The question in my mind is should there be some machinery on some permanent basis whereby you have this machinery essentially, State, CIA, and Defense, and a sort of permanent committee with broader responsibilities, in a sense like the 5412 Committee, but with broader responsibilities, not just to consider covert operations but all cold war operations.

MR. DULLES: Then you have another task force with Mr. Nitze on Cuba, another one on Iran under the State Department, and there was a fourth one under the State Department.



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RESPONSE: If you put it in the White House, it means in the Old State Department Building and then you have a medley of problems such as security, and so on, and I think you should give the President a cushion. If you have the President sending out uncoordinated messages to Ambassadors all over the world, you're going to have chaos.

STATEMENT: These are practical questions that have to be solved.

MR. DULLES: Something of this kind should be established and the State Department, when they get the right men, ought to share in it.

COLONEL BLACK: The way to get around the interdepartmental problem is to have representatives of the departments in the command post as working members. They're not going to be representing their departments, they're going to be working for the President, but they would keep their departments informed and they know where to get information, and so forth.

GENERAL TAYLOR: We are facing the same problem in an international area that we faced in Defense; namely, the concept has now been abandoned by the Army, Navy, and Air Force, that the departments per se can go out and fight wars. The people who do go out and fight wars are a task force. I think we are faced with that in international relations. The State Department has developed people with certain skills, as has CIA and Defense. There ought to be something in the economic field, where you have that component well represented. Then the Ambassador sits on top of this group and



[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
reports back to the President. Now we haven't got to this, but isn't this the concept?

MR. DULLES: Yes, and the Ambassador reports back to the President and not to the State Department, and your economic capability ought to tie right in.

QUESTION: To whom do you look at the present time for that kind of economic warfare advice?

MR. DULLES: Mr. Ball. But we've never had since the war any office that looked upon the economic thing as a weapon to defeat someone.

STATEMENT: Well, I think we ought to take this paper and read it over and possibly have another session on the matter.

COLONEL BLACK: I would just like to make one point before I leave and I think it is an important one. This is the difference in thinking between State and Defense. State tends to be reluctant to apply national power, particularly military power, during its conduct of diplomacy because of the fear of complicating the strictly political and psychological situations. Elements in State have gotten to the point where they think that power is basically an immoral thing and the application of power in any form is an immoral act, and this is not true. It depends on whether or not you use power to preserve peace or use it for an immoral purpose.

STATEMENT: I think that it's important that the President have representatives of both points of view, so that neither one would have freedom to dominate.

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Castro. These people were to come into the beachhead and pick up this material, and then the beachhead would expand and they would very soon have a formidable military organization. Considering this plan and the location of the enemy forces on the basis of the time and space factors, it appeared to me that they could accomplish their objective. Sometime later the Chairman said the President would not approve the TRINIDAD Plan because it smacked too much of Normandy, which would make it impossible to deny U.S. involvement. Consequently CIA was directed to develop some alternatives. Later Gen. Gray came in and briefed us on some alternate plans and, as I understood it, there was no question about the Trinidad thing. It was out right there as far as doing it in its original form. A new requirement was levied on CIA to make their landing where there was an airfield. It was my personal feeling that the airfield requirement virtually restricted the operation to the Zapata region. The JCS decided that there was no question about it, the Zapata area had the greatest possibility of success of the alternatives we were considering. Following this there was considerable discussion about how many aircraft Castro had, and the best way to eliminate the tanks. There seemed to be no question about being able to destroy Castro's aircraft with napalm, strafing and rockets, nor the ability to disrupt the tanks. That brings us to the place where the decision was made to go in and try the Zapata thing. However, one thought was predominate. You must achieve and maintain air superiority or you are not going to be able to get ashore.

QUESTION: Did you feel that Zapata was as good a plan as Trinidad?

GENERAL SHOUP: No, sir. I questioned the swamp area. However, after considerable thought and discussion, I was satisfied that by dropping paratroopers to block the roads and by using anti-tank mines you could accomplish the same objectives in the Zapata area that you could in the Trinidad area. However, there were complications in the distances the people would have to come to get the weapons, the problem of maneuvering would be more difficult, and the possibility of debouching would also be more difficult from the Zapata area.

QUESTION: There was no civilian population in the area at all, was there?

[REDACTED]

GENERAL SHOUP: There were about 1,800 people where the landings were made.

QUESTION: You made the point that one of the essential parts of the TRINIDAD Plan was the fact that they had a population there on which they could base their expansion. Did you consider that possibility existed in Zapata?

GENERAL SHOUP: Yes, sir. The idea was that time and space factors were favorable. It was my understanding that there were lots of people just waiting for these arms, that they would get them in the same manner as they would have in the TRINIDAD Plan. However, you were closer to some of Castro's army forces and tank forces and you would have more difficulty debouching from this area.

QUESTION: Did you visualize that this landing would attract sizable Castro forces?

GENERAL SHOUP: Obviously, once he determined the location of the main invasion, Castro was bound to bring in his forces.

QUESTION: How were the dissident Cuban civilians going to get their arms then?

GENERAL SHOUP The parachutists and anti-tank mines would block the roadways. Then the whole area would be in a state of revolt. There would be no problem of them coming through. These people would have been much closer to their source of arms than the enemy, because the enemy didn't know where they were coming in.

QUESTION: Was there any impression that there was going to be a pre-D-Day message to the population?

GENERAL SHOUP: My understanding was that the possibilities of uprisings were increasing, that people were just waiting for these arms and equipment, and as soon as they heard where the invasion was that they would be coming after them.

QUESTION: If you were in charge of the defenses in this area couldn't you get some artillery in and really give them hell?



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GENERAL SHOUP: Yes, sir, any corporal would have said that.

QUESTION: The Chiefs <sup>disparately</sup> rated the chances of success for Zapata as something less than fair. What was your appraisal of the chances of success of this operation?

GENERAL SHOUP: The plan they had should have accomplished the mission in Zapata, if the plan had been brought to fruition.

QUESTION: You did not expect a quick or strong reaction from the Castro forces?

GENERAL SHOUP: I expected them to react, but not with some of the equipment with which they did react, and I don't think they would have if the plans had been carried out.

QUESTION: As you saw this plan develop, the amphibious landing on a hostile shore, did you have any misgivings?

GENERAL SHOUP: I very frankly made this statement, if this kind of an operation can be done with this kind of a force with this much training and knowledge about it, then we are wasting our time in our divisions, we ought to go on leave for three months out of four.

MR. DULLES: Do you realize how many military men we had on this task force? Some of your very best officers. We took a great deal of responsibility, but we called on the Defense Department and I looked to them for military judgments. I didn't look to our people for military judgments.

QUESTION: General Shoup, isn't that statement of yours somewhat in contradiction with your over-all optimism that this plan would work?

GENERAL SHOUP: No, sir, it is not.

QUESTION: Would you say that you took the same interest in this operation and made the same personal analysis as you would have done had you been in charge?

GENERAL SHOUP: I'll say this. I spent a lot of sleepless hours over this because I worried about the thing because there was no plan for helping these men if there was something unforeseen, an act of God or something, that prevented a successful landing. In my opinion there would be no way to save



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then. There was no way to guarantee its success, but if the plan was executed, as planned, I believe it would have been successful. I couldn't find out all I wanted to about the plan. I knew I wasn't supposed to. It wasn't my responsibility. Had I been completely responsible I think I would have known about everything. There were only four people in my headquarters that knew anything about the plan.

STATEMENT: Let's go back to this question of military responsibility. Certainly you, as Commandant of the Marine Corps, had no responsibility for it, but as a member of the Joint Chiefs you did have responsibility for this operation.

GENERAL SHOUP: That's not my understanding.

STATEMENT: At least the JCS as a corporate body had responsibility for this operation.

GENERAL SHOUP: That's not my understanding, only insofar as the Commander in Chief might want to know something about the adequacy of the plan, or the probability of success. Otherwise I don't feel that I or the other Joint Chiefs had any responsibility for the success of this plan.

QUESTION: The Joint Chiefs are by law the advisors to the Secretary of Defense, National Security Council, and the President. Consequently, would you say that you should volunteer any advice on this subject?

GENERAL SHOUP: As a member of the Joint Chiefs I don't know what the Chairman did. I don't know what happened at a lot of meetings at the White House or the State Department but I do know this, that within the corporate body I for one emphasized time after time that we had to have air superiority and we had to help this outfit fend off the force they were going to have opposing them down there.

ADMIRAL BURKE: There are three or four things that are the basis of this thing that ought to be clear. One is the responsibility of the Chiefs to comment on the plan. Another is the actual conduct of the operation, which was all in one place and that was in CIA.

MR. DULLES: But that was done by military personnel.

ADMIRAL BURKE: But not under our command structure.

STATEMENT: But as advisors to the President the JCS had a responsibility. The President had the right to look to the Joint Chiefs for advice during the planning or execution phase if they thought they had something important to offer.

GENERAL SHOUP: That's true, as limited by their knowledge of all aspects of the plan.

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

STATEMENT: And in the absence of hearing from the Chiefs he had a right to assume that everything was going satisfactorily.

GENERAL SHOUP: Yes, to the limit of our knowledge. I want to tell you this right now. Had I as an individual heard that they were going to call off the air strikes I'd have asked that the Commander in Chief be informed. I'd have called him myself because it was absolutely essential to success. The D-2 affair was only a half effort.

MR. DULLES: General, may I add this. The D-2 Day was essentially a plot, not a plan. The plan was the D-Day strike.

QUESTION: Do you feel that you had absolute and complete knowledge about this operation?

GENERAL SHOUP: Absolutely not.

QUESTION: Did you understand that the President and his advisors were looking to you for your military evaluation of this plan?

GENERAL SHOUP: The thing that we were asked to do was to determine which of the three alternatives was the best.

QUESTION: But then after that, did you understand that during that period of time that the President was looking to you, the JCS, for the military evaluation of the operation?

GENERAL SHOUP: I would have to presume that in accordance with his title as Commander in Chief he would be thinking about the military part.

QUESTION: But you understand that he wanted to get your advice and ideas also?

GENERAL SHOUP: That was never stated.

QUESTION: What I am getting at is that if you feel that you didn't have full knowledge and information on the plan and at the same time the President was looking to you for advice, it seems to me it would be almost impossible for you to give him the military evaluation.

GENERAL SHOUP: Well, you had to look at it in the context of what the agency said about the uprisings. I had no possible way to know or evaluate them. That in itself was a particularly important factor.



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

STATEMENT: There was a general impression that the Joint Chiefs of Staff had approved this operation. I don't think there is any doubt but what they went ahead thinking that you and the other Joint Chiefs had approved the plan, but you now say that you didn't have full knowledge and information in order to evaluate the plan. That in itself is of some significance for the future.

GENERAL SHOUP: One of the main features relating to the ultimate success of this was not whether you could put these ships in here and unload this military equipment, whether the people were properly trained to fend off a reasonable enemy effort.

STATEMENT: Your idea of the plan is entirely different from some other peoples' idea of the plan.

GENERAL SHOUP: I'm telling the truth as I know it.

STATEMENT: I don't think there is any doubt about that.

STATEMENT: The idea that the people would land on the beach and then take off into the swamp is a new one to us.

ADMIRAL BURKE: There was great emphasis on the uprisings and we spent hours and hours determining how to get additional equipment. We ended up with equipment for 30,000 people. The only slight difference I have with General Shoup is that it was my understanding that this group had to be able to hold a beachhead for some time, for several days.

STATEMENT: It's very significant that the Commandant of the Marine Corps, whom the President of the United States and the Secretary of State thought had approved this plan, had an entirely different idea of what the plan was. It seems that something has gone wrong somewhere along the line.

GENERAL SHOUP: This whole thing was a function of time.

STATEMENT: But when I asked you, you said they were going to get out of there the same day. They were only going to hold a beachhead long enough to unload the equipment. There wasn't any possibility of anybody coming down there. There wasn't anybody around there. Their idea was to hold that beachhead. I think it is important that when the President and the Secretary of State think they have your view, that they do have your view.

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GENERAL TAYLOR: You feel that the Joint Chiefs recognized their responsibility for advising the President, but did not make any special comments to him mainly because you thought the plan was going along all right.

GENERAL SHOUP: I think you have to preface all these remarks by recognizing that I was not consulted as to whether such a thing ought to happen. That wasn't my business.

GENERAL TAYLOR: The overthrow of Castro you accepted?

GENERAL SHOUP: Yes, that was national policy.

GENERAL TAYLOR: Wouldn't you say that the Joint Chiefs had every right and responsibility if they didn't believe that an amphibious landing of this kind would succeed, to so advise the President?

GENERAL SHOUP: Absolutely.

GENERAL TAYLOR: Were you satisfied with the plan as being a feasible, reasonable plan?

GENERAL SHOUP: To accomplish the mission as I understood it, not the destruction of the armed forces.

QUESTION: What was the mission?

GENERAL SHOUP: The mission was to get some well-trained military people into Cuba, who could gather into their fold and equip all the people that were just waiting for a chance to get at Castro, then these military people could develop a real military organization and increase their strength to the extent that the whole Castro regime would fall apart.

QUESTION: The success of this operation was wholly dependent upon popular support?

GENERAL SHOUP: Absolutely. Ultimate success.

STATEMENT: Not only ultimate success, but any success really.

QUESTION: Who gave you this information on the uprisings?

GENERAL SHOUP: I don't know. I suppose it was CIA. Well, it's obvious we wouldn't be taking 30,000 additional rifles if we didn't think there was going to be somebody to use them. I don't think any military man would ever think that this force could overthrow Castro without support. They could never expect anything but annihilation.

GENERAL SHOUP: Absolutely. I don't think there is any doubt at all. Eventually 1,500 people cannot hold out against many, many thousands.

GENERAL SHOUP: No, I wouldn't, unless 1,200 Marines are going to be assisted by 30,000 Cubans.

GENERAL SHOUP: No, they didn't, but we were getting materials ready for

GENERAL SHOUP: Yes, I asked about it on the first briefings. Even in the rainy season parts of it were passable by foot and in the dry season much of it was passable by foot. There were a number of egresses other than the roads. That's what we were told.

GENERAL SHOUP: To my knowledge I was personally present each time that General Gray briefed the Joint Chiefs.

GENERAL SHOUP: No, sir.

GENERAL SHOUP: I don't think that at this time in 1961 or hereafter you are going to do it covertly.

GENERAL SHOUP: I did not.



( [REDACTED] )  
[REDACTED]  
GENERAL WHITE

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

QUESTION: What action was taken on the over-all U.S. plan of action for Cuba developed by the JCS in late January?

GENERAL WHITE: I don't know.

QUESTION: What was the JCS view of the military feasibility of the Trinidad and Zapata plans?

GENERAL WHITE: Our evaluation was that the operation had a fair chance of success based on (1) the mission and (2) the intelligence, which indicated that popular uprisings were likely. The next point that weighed heavily in my mind was the probability that this force could escape into the hills to the northwest of the beach area and join with guerrillas there if they were unable to enlarge the beachhead. The third point was the importance of surprise, particularly in the air part of the picture. The Zapata plan was briefed at a JCS meeting. I was not there. Curt LeMay was, however, and he filled me in on the three alternatives; and the fact that the Chiefs thought that the Trinidad operation was still the best, but that of the three alternatives presented, Zapata was probably the best.

QUESTION: As you learned more about the Zapata plan, did you ever make an appraisal in your own mind as to the probability of success?

GENERAL WHITE: I felt all along that the success or failure of this operation depended almost entirely upon the reaction of the Cuban people. If we were able to establish and enlarge the beachhead somewhat, plus other subsidiary operations, if we did these things, the Cuban people would join in.

QUESTION: Describe your recollection of the beachhead plan. How did you visualize that this force would behave when they got ashore?

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GENERAL WHITE: Well, the number one thing that I felt was vital was surprise air attacks on the several air fields. While I don't have a high regard for the Cuban air force, certainly it is a prerequisite for going ashore that you have air control, and I think the air strikes were the key to it and surprise was the key to the key so to speak. It seemed to me that if the location and timing of the attack were not known, that they would have a very good chance of establishing at least sufficient lodgment to be able to escape without disaster.

QUESTION: Assuming the air strikes?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, and that the air strikes were achieved with surprise.

QUESTION: When the Joint Chiefs commented on Trinidad and as Zapata initially developed to <sup>have</sup> bring the only strikes on D Day, did that appear adequate to knock out the Castro force?

GENERAL WHITE: It was felt that heavy surprise attack, and if I could have only had one, I would have picked the one on D Day rather than one earlier, for two reasons: (1) I think the early one may have tipped off that this thing was coming, (2) I remember mentioning down there that I was a little bit worried about the relationship between Cuba and Guatemala because it would be obvious that the aircraft were coming from there, and I wasn't quite sure what the situation would be. At another point I thought that if we did do the pre-D Day strikes, there was a pretty good chance that world reaction would be such that the thing would be called off, and I had been keen on the United States seeking the initiative in some areas, and I thought that on balance this was a feasible show and I wanted to see it go on.

QUESTION: How did you feel about the final limited plan of eight sorties against the air fields?

GENERAL WHITE: In my opinion, it was fatally weak.

QUESTION: Would it have been better not to have had them.

GENERAL WHITE: I think the best operation would have been to launch as heavy a strike as we could on the air fields on the day of the attack.



[REDACTED]

QUESTION: Who was the proponent of the D-2 strikes, Allen?

I don't recall that point.

MR. DULLES: I think that it was partly in our shop and partly with Mac Bundy, as I recall. The idea of the defections -- this was one of the keys to the idea that the planes that were striking Cuban airfields were operating from Cuba.

MR. DULLES: I can't say whether that limited strike concept was ever brought over here or not. I think it must have been known to General Gray, but I don't know whether it was discussed in the Joint Chiefs.

ADMIRAL BURKE: It was, but not before it was decided to do it. I think that this was done at the behest of State in order to get a Cuban defector ahead of time, so that it would be believed that Cubans were conducting the air strikes from Cuba.

STATEMENT: Well, we'll see what Gray's record shows on that.

QUESTION: You thought that Zapata looked like a feasible plan?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes. However, I felt it was inferior to the Trinidad plan.

QUESTION: Did you feel that you had a reasonable understanding of what the plan amounted to by the time D Day approached?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, I had a reasonable understanding of the plan as it was supposed to go but didn't.

QUESTION: Would you say you made a personal study of this at least of the air elements?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, and I had action officers who were privileged with this information who worked very close with the Joint Staff and with CIA and on appropriate occasions they briefed me on what was going on in addition to the meetings we had formally in the JCS.

QUESTION: Do you recall when you learned about this D-2 plan?

GENERAL WHITE: No, I do not. I have no memory of any change. The D-1 strike and the D Day strikes were the ones that I was under the impression would go.

QUESTION: I forgot the D-1 air strikes, Allen. That was discussed I know, but did that ever get going?

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MR. DULLES: Well, that was discussed, but it never went.

GENERAL WHITE: May I say I remember very well the discussion of defectors. We got into it because we had the air defense force moving down to Homestead in Florida with its additional radar, and we wanted to get the defectors in and to be on guard in case the Cuban air force made a strike against Florida.

QUESTION: You were in favor of this plan then?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, to the degree that it had a fair chance of success on the basis that the objective was to get a rallying of Cuban people.

QUESTION: Did you make any distinction between Zapata and Trinidad?

GENERAL WHITE: In my opinion the Trinidad operation was a better one, but once the decision was made to go into Zapata, we backed it..

QUESTION: You wouldn't have backed it if you didn't think there would be a chance of success?

GENERAL WHITE: I think it also had a fair chance of success, but I think the chances were better in the Trinidad operation.

QUESTION: Viewing this from the point of view of the President, you, of course, felt that the JCS were the primary military advisors. He heard nothing from the Chiefs with regard to any infeasibility of this plan. Is it fair to say that the Chiefs would have volunteered their comment if they really thought that this thing was going badly?

GENERAL WHITE: Without any question. The problem was that there were last minute changes of which we did not know.

QUESTION: You refer to the last minute cancellation of the air strikes?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes.

STATEMENT: But that was just one factor.

GENERAL WHITE: I think that was a very key factor, sir.

STATEMENT: Well, in this operation, I think we would be convinced that the plan wouldn't have been any more successful if we had had the air strikes.



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GENERAL WHITE: Well, I really believe that the Cuban air force had a whale of an effect on the bad outcome. It is difficult to say what an air strike on D Day at dawn would have done, but it might very well have made the difference in my opinion.

QUESTION: In the performance of the T-33s, were you surprised at how effective they were?

GENERAL WHITE: I was surprised to find that they were armed.

QUESTION: You did not consider that they were combat aircraft?

GENERAL WHITE: We did not.

QUESTION: Well, had you known they were armed?

GENERAL WHITE: Well, there again you come back to how effective the air strikes would have been. I certainly would have wanted the T-33s to be one of the main targets of the strike force.

QUESTION: Was it any surprise to you that these T-33s could take out the B-26s.

GENERAL WHITE: No, there was no surprise about that. That's another thing, the B-26s were used as air cover over the beaches. The B-26 is a light bomber.

STATEMENT: Yes, but you knew that was the case -- that that was the only cover they would have on the beach.

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, but they were supposed to have air strikes which would come first and the B-26s, as I understood it, would be used largely for ground support.

QUESTION: You said that you would have recommended that the T-33s be knocked out?

GENERAL WHITE: In planning these strikes for the three airfields, certainly I would have urged that we concentrate strikes on the fields that had the T-33s.

QUESTION: Would you have made a recommendation that they be knocked out?

GENERAL WHITE: We didn't know that they were armed.

QUESTION: Based on the information you had, then you would never have recommended that they be knocked out?

GENERAL WHITE: They would have been included in the over-all plan to knock out Castro's air force.



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STATEMENT: Yes, but they were on the field on D-2, but they didn't knock them out.

GENERAL WHITE: Had we known that the T-33s were armed, we might well have highlighted the field where the T-33s were located.

QUESTION: Did you think that the crews they had were sufficient in number? Did that concern you at all?

GENERAL WHITE: I think the numbers were adequate. We sent an Air Force officer down as part of a team to make an evaluation. They made quite a complete report. The report was very favorable on the quality of the Cuban pilots.

QUESTION: By the time D Day afternoon came, the crews were exhausted because they had to fly from Nicaragua to Cuba in a seven-hour trip.

STATEMENT: This is a very important point. I think the record shows that they had 17 Cuban pilots and about six American pilots. Now, suppose they had knocked out Castro's aircraft and then provided air cover over the beach because the invasion force immediately attracted very heavy forces of the Castro ground <sup>into</sup> movement. As I picture it, this would have put a major strain on this little air force.

ADMIRAL BURKE: I think some of the pilots' energy was dissipated in sitting up all night waiting to go and they didn't go, but this was just as bad as going.

QUESTION: How many pilots would it take to keep two planes over the airfield during daylight?

GENERAL WHITE: Do you want me to check it or give you an off-hand answer?

QUESTION: Did that ever occur to you during this time?

GENERAL WHITE: Perhaps not specifically, but I'm sure I evaluated it in my own mind and my people did.

QUESTION: What was your concept of this plan? What was it intended to do, and how would they go about it?

GENERAL WHITE: It was intended to make a lodgment and then fan out to gain as much of the beachhead as possible, expecting that there would be a great many of the guerrilla people and other defectors that would join in, and we had ammunition and equipment to give them as they came in to the fold.

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QUESTION: The guerrillas were to come in to the beach?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, wherever they could join in.

QUESTION: Then they would just come down into that area where the landing took place?

GENERAL WHITE: I understand that there were leaflets to be dropped and a general call for the people to rise against Castro.

QUESTION: When was the uprising to take place?

GENERAL WHITE: I think as soon as it could be generated.

QUESTION: Was it to take place simultaneously or within a short period?

GENERAL WHITE: Within a short period, I would say beginning with D Day it ought to snowball.

QUESTION: How did you visualize any great number of these civilians coming in to the beachhead area with Castro's forces coming down the same route, in, behind, and along the lines of communication?

GENERAL WHITE: I understand there were a good number of defectors who came over even under the circumstances.

QUESTION: Did you think that this group of 1,200 people could hold this beachhead?

GENERAL WHITE: There was a fair chance of holding the beachhead if the air was knocked out. We had also anticipated that there would be more uprisings throughout Cuba which would divert the Cuban armed forces elsewhere and they would not be able to concentrate on this one place.

STATEMENT: Just so the record is complete, when we had a briefing from one of the pilots, we asked him about the T-33s and he said they weren't aware at that time of the problem or difficulty with the T-33s and they concentrated on the B-26s.

QUESTION: The question of going guerrilla has come up. It was thought that if things went badly, these people could operate as guerrillas. How was this presented to the Joint Chiefs and how did they regard that alternative?

GENERAL WHITE: On this particular operation, I cannot say.

On the Trinidad operation, I've a very clear memory.

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: Would you say that the guerrilla phase was specifically studied by the Joint Chiefs?

GENERAL WHITE: Only the fact that there were guerrillas in the area and that it was anticipated that the people would join with them.

QUESTION: Was there any thought to evacuating by sea?

GENERAL WHITE: Not until later in the game.

QUESTION: How did the Joint Chiefs follow the course of the operation after D Day? Were you kept informed of what was going on?

GENERAL WHITE: I was kept informed generally by my action officer.

QUESTION: Did you have liaison with General Gray's office?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Were you aware of the criticality of the ammunition situation at the end of the second day?

GENERAL WHITE: I had heard about it.

QUESTION: But you didn't have any realization that the battle would be won or lost the night of D+1 - D+2 unless they got ammunition?

GENERAL WHITE: No. My impression is that in general we had very little knowledge of what was actually taking place at the beachhead.

QUESTION: How would you define the responsibility of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in this operation?

GENERAL WHITE: Number one, we were called on for our views; we gave them to the best of our ability; and once the decision was made to go into Zapata, we supported it any way we could.

QUESTION: Would you say you had the responsibility to volunteer advice to the President and since he received no contrary advice he had a right to assume that all was well?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, except that a number of things took place that I did not know about. I knew nothing about the cancellation of the air strikes.



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QUESTION: I'm going to ask the same question I asked General Shoup. Do you feel that the JCS studied this plan and gave it that cold hard look which they would have given it had it been their plan?

GENERAL WHITE: Certainly they did with the Trinidad plan. I don't know about Zapata. I was not there when it was briefed. It was my understanding, however, that the basic over-all considerations were similar. I would say we did not make as detailed an evaluation of the alternatives as we did the Trinidad plan.

QUESTION: Looking back on this thing now with the benefit of experience, how do you feel about the covert nature of the plan? Was it realistic to consider that this could be kept covert - by that I mean a plan that cannot be attributed plausibly to the United States?

GENERAL WHITE: I am sure that we could not expect to train a very sizable group of people with aircraft in any part of the world at least any populated part of the world without the world knowing. So I am sure that the training base in Guatemala was well known to the Cubans. This is hearsay. I was told that somebody briefed many Latin American governments about this forthcoming operation to get their views and met with almost unanimous disapproval. I'd say this alone was enough for a tipoff.

STATEMENT: I believe this was Mr. Berle's mission down south.

QUESTION: Do you have any comment on a landing on a hostile shore which is covert?

GENERAL WHITE: I don't object to the military doing covert things; in fact, this may be a wise way for the future on this sort of thing. But there are certain considerations; I don't believe you should have U.S. officers in uniform because this puts them into a different category and they take risks beyond those which are usually expected of them in peace time. As far as covert operations are concerned, I think probably they should be done under the aegis of some agency other than Defense.



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MR. DULLES: The question is, can there be a section in the Department of Defense that has been sheep-dipped or something. How are we going to do this in the future?

GENERAL WHITE: I think there should be greater Department of Defense participation; in fact, I think perhaps the responsibility ought to be placed on military professionals, but I believe it still should be under the aegis of some other agency. I would not like to see this type of operation attributable to the Department of Defense.

STATEMENT: It might have been done something like this. The CIA could have done everything up to and including recruiting, assembling, and putting them into a covert training area, and organizing the covert protection around it. Training at that point could have been turned over to the Department of Defense. Planning could have been turned over to the Department of Defense and the execution turned over to the Department of Defense.

GENERAL WHITE: That's all right with me. However, I think that the cover should be with the CIA or some agency other than the DOD.

MR. DULLES: When you get an operation this big, the cover blows off.

QUESTION: What do you say about the quality of interdepartmental coordination on this plan?

GENERAL WHITE: I think it could be improved very much. I don't know of a formalized body short of the NSC that takes a problem like this and integrates all the interested Government agencies into a planning group.

STATEMENT: It's been a problem for a long time.

GENERAL WHITE: I think not only in this type of thing but in the cold war. After all, in hot war, we're certainly organized for it and we hope ready for it. Limited wars - we're organized for and we hope prepared for, but this kind of covert operation we're talking about now is part of the cold war. The cold war is on every day of our lives and I think we need a similar organization to fight the cold war.



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QUESTION: Have you spelled that out?

GENERAL WHITE: OCB started this kind of a thing I believe, but it was always kind of loose. The organization we need is not only to oppose Soviet power, but to take the initiative.

STATEMENT: I wish you would give us your thoughts at your leisure.

GENERAL WHITE: My staff has prepared a study on this subject which I subscribe to.

GENERAL WHITE: Almost every agency in the Government is involved in fighting this cold war.

QUESTION: Are you suggesting that possibly the NSC framework is the place to hang this or are you talking about something separate?

GENERAL WHITE: I think the NSC is too high level an organization. I don't think it should be an operating organization. I conceive this to be an operational group. They undoubtedly would have to report to the NSC or send it to the President.

QUESTION: Would you give us your views on this thing?

GENERAL WHITE: My views will be just what is contained in this study.

QUESTION: Will you send us a copy of the study?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Will you go back to the operations for a minute? Do you think that in view of the circumstances, this was given sufficient time and attention by the Joint Staff?

GENERAL WHITE: Yes, up to the word "go" but there were a lot of last minute changes.

QUESTION: I understand that, but as of the 15th of March, the "go ahead" signal from a military point of view to the President and to those who were making the decisions was given. Thereafter, there were continuous meetings that took place and nobody came forward and said, this is going to be fatal; we shouldn't go ahead. Really considerable support developed from individual members and from the Chairman. The President understood

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that it was supported by the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In view of all this, do you feel it was given sufficient time and attention by you as an individual and by the Joint Chiefs of Staff?

GENERAL WHITE: I will make the single point that General Shoup made. I think there were times when the Chairman was consulted and although he has been extraordinarily conscientious to keep us informed, I think that things took place at levels above the Joint Chiefs of Staff about which we were not fully informed. On those things which we had cognizance of, I believe the Joint Chiefs accomplished their task.

MR. KENNEDY: For instance, as I look at the records, I see that the original Zapata Plan plus the alternatives were considered by the JCS for twenty minutes.

GENERAL WHITE: I can't tell you the times because I wasn't there, but I believe by virtue of the study that was made on the Trinidad Plan, that it was fairly easy to have a good look at the Zapata Plan and come up with a statement that the Trinidad Plan was still the best, but that of the three alternatives Zapata was the best.

QUESTION: Then your answer is that you feel that you gave sufficient time, opinion and study.

GENERAL WHITE: On an over-all basis, yes, sir.



[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

QUESTION: Did you brief the pilots before D-2?

[REDACTED]: That's correct.

QUESTION: Were the T-33s considered a dangerous weapon in the hands of Castro?

[REDACTED]: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Were the pilots briefed to knock them out first?

[REDACTED]: No, they were told to knock out any offensive aircraft, including B-26, T-33, Sea Furies and any single-engine combat type aircraft in the parking area.

QUESTION: Was there any priority?

[REDACTED]: Not by aircraft type. The plan was based on destroying all offensive aircraft.

QUESTION: A pilot by the name of [REDACTED] gave us quite a different picture. Was he an important figure there?

[REDACTED]: He was one of our intelligence officers.

QUESTION: Was he at the briefing?

[REDACTED]: He assisted. However, I was the person in charge of the briefing.

QUESTION: Were these T-33s isolated or were they interspersed with the other aircraft?

[REDACTED]: They were isolated to the extent that they were parked on individual revetments.

QUESTION: How many T-33 aircraft were there?

[REDACTED]: There were four on the 6th of April parked at San Antonio de los Banos, there was one parked at Santiago de Cuba, and these were the photos we used for planning our strikes.

QUESTION: How many did you knock out?

[REDACTED]: We knocked out all but two and then between the 15th of April and the 18th of April they managed to get one more aircraft into commission. Out of the five we feel that we knocked out three during the D-2 strikes.

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: Whose idea was the D-2 air strikes?

[REDACTED]: I cannot tell you that.

QUESTION: Were you in favor of these strikes?

[REDACTED]: I was in favor of any effort that would knock out their offensive air capability.

STATEMENT: It could be argued, I think, that for a limited air strike of only eight planes, you were giving up the benefit of surprise on D-Day. Furthermore, that he should have dispersed his airplanes if he'd used his head.

[REDACTED]: That's what I was afraid of. Our original Zapata Plan was based on strikes on D-Day only. They were to make strikes at dawn and then go back in the afternoon and strike any that hadn't been knocked out in the morning raid.

QUESTION: Did you think that the pre-D Day strikes strengthened the plan?

[REDACTED]: D-1 would strengthen the plan.

STATEMENT: I can see that, but I have real doubt in my mind as to whether you did well by accepting those other D-2 strikes.



GENERAL DECKER

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

QUESTION: What action was taken on the over-all U.S. plan of action for Cuba developed by the JCS in late January?

GENERAL DECKER: Nothing positive.

QUESTION: What was the JCS view of the military feasibility of Trinidad and Zapata?

GENERAL DECKER: We felt that success in terms of the mission, as we understood it, was feasible; that this force would be able to get ashore and establish a bridgehead and thereby provide a catalyst to which other dissident elements throughout Cuba might rally. Trinidad was reviewed first and then several alternatives were considered. However, the JCS considered Trinidad preferable to any of the alternatives.

QUESTION: Did you ever evaluate the chances of success of the Zapata operation in your own mind?

GENERAL DECKER: If this had been a regular military force, Trinidad would have been better for a regular type landing. However, for the purpose of the landing that was planned under the Zapata concept, this area provided a reasonable chance of success.

QUESTION: What was the purpose of Zapata?

GENERAL DECKER: The same as that for Trinidad, to establish a beachhead, serve as a catalyst for uprisings, and get people into the beachhead area to build up the force.

QUESTION: How could people get into the area to build up this force?

GENERAL DECKER: Well, it was more difficult than reaching the Trinidad area. However, this force had a secondary purpose, and that was that if trouble developed that they couldn't handle, they were to go to the hills.

~~ULTRA SENSITIVE~~

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

QUESTION: Did you look at the Zapata area from the possibility of conducting guerrilla operations in the area?

GENERAL DECKER: I thought there was too much swamp. It would be difficult for people to join in the beachhead area. It was visualized that there would be several focal points of activity in the beachhead area.

QUESTION: Did you visualize that one of these groups might be wiped out?

GENERAL DECKER: We pointed out that if surprise was lost they might be wiped out.

QUESTION: To what extent did you go over this plan?

GENERAL DECKER: I went over it thoroughly with Army planners. We reviewed the Trinidad Plan thoroughly. However, since Zapata was so similar, we didn't express our views on it to the degree that we had on Trinidad.

QUESTION: What was the understanding of the importance of control of the air? Were the Chiefs satisfied with the plan without pre-D-Day strikes?

GENERAL DECKER: The advantages of pre-D-Day strikes would be that Castro's aircraft would be knocked out prior to the landing. I was in favor of pre-D-Day strikes two or three days in advance.

STATEMENT: I believe that the Zapata Plan included an air strike at dawn on D-Day. The D-2 strikes developed later in April.

GENERAL DECKER: The air plan was changed several times without my knowledge.

QUESTION: What was the understanding of the JCS as to the action of the landing force if it effected a lodgment but no uprisings occurred?

GENERAL DECKER: There was supposed to have been an announcement of a provisional government once the bridgehead had been established. Then if this group didn't get support from the populace, they were supposed to go to the hills. I don't recall any discussion of sea evacuation.

QUESTION: How did you follow the course of the operation after D-Day?



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GENERAL DECKER: I was out of the city temporarily on Monday, the 17th, but returned to Washington that evening. General Eddleman attended several meetings in my absence. After my return we were briefed on developments at the JCS meetings.

QUESTION: When did you get the impression that the ammunition situation was critical?

GENERAL DECKER: I believe it was on the 18th when I received word that several of the ships had been sunk.

QUESTION: Was it called to your attention that two ammunition ships had gone as far as 200 miles south?

GENERAL DECKER: Not that I recall.

QUESTION: Did the Chiefs discuss whether or not the attempt to keep this covert was feasible?

GENERAL DECKER: It never occurred to me that we could disown supporting this operation.

QUESTION: Do you feel that CIA is capable of running an operation like this?

GENERAL DECKER: I'm not able to say if they were capable. I will say as a general rule, however, that military operations should be controlled by the military.

QUESTION: Do you think that at some point the control should have been passed to the military?

GENERAL DECKER: As long as the United States is going to back an operation of this sort, it seems that the military should be responsible for the whole thing. They should do the planning, training, evaluation, and the execution.

QUESTION: What role would CIA play in this kind of an operation then?

GENERAL DECKER: I think they would continue to handle the strictly covert parts of the plan. The only part that I believe the military should take over from the CIA would be the military aspects of the operation.

[REDACTED]

QUESTION: Were you surprised by the effectiveness of Castro's forces?

GENERAL DECKER: I wasn't surprised that most remained loyal. I was surprised at the speed and effectiveness with which they moved.

QUESTION: Did you consider the effectiveness of the T-33s as being a major threat to the operation?

GENERAL DECKER: That point was not made.

QUESTION: How do you view the JCS responsibility in this sort of an operation?

GENERAL DECKER: To give our best judgments and evaluations to CIA and anyone else that asks for them and is entitled to them.

QUESTION: If you thought things were not as they should have been, would you have taken the initiative to advise the President or other appropriate personnel about this fact?

GENERAL DECKER: Yes, and we were making recommendations to CIA.

ADMIRAL BURKE: In this connection, I think that General Lemnitzer suggested (1) that we fly air cover, (2) that the Navy put air cover over the beachhead area at dawn on D+1, and (3) that we strike their tanks. These were not formal or written recommendations. They were simply put forth to Mr. Bissell.

QUESTION: As I recall, the Chiefs did not make any recommendations to the President?

GENERAL DECKER: If we had thought the plan would fail, we certainly would have advised the President.

QUESTION: How could interdepartmental planning and coordination be better effected in a future similar operation, and how should a paramilitary operation be fitted into our governmental machinery?

GENERAL DECKER: As far as coordination is concerned between CIA and DOD, I think it was all that could be expected. I would say, however, that authority and responsibility were not adequately centered in one person.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



QUESTION: What can we do to make our paramilitary operations better in the future? I believe that the Army is the only service with Special Forces. Does the Army have plans for expansion of these forces?

GENERAL DECKER: Yes, but we have a greater capability now than is being used. They could be used in Viet Nam and South America to train indigenous personnel.

STATEMENT: Colonel Kinard indicated that modest increases were planned for the Special Forces in the near future.

GENERAL DECKER: We have increased by 500 this year. If our additional requests are approved, we will increase this force considerably in the coming year.

QUESTION: In your Special Force considerations, have you established an R&D factor?

GENERAL DECKER: Yes. However, training is the most important aspect of our operation.

QUESTION: Do you have any other suggestions?

GENERAL DECKER: Yes, it seems that this type operation involves several agencies of the Government, State, CIA, and the DOD. Some coordinating agency would be helpful in drawing on all agencies in order to effectively prosecute the cold war - some permanent agency in one place.

QUESTION: Where should this agency be established?

GENERAL DECKER: Under the NSC or elsewhere but where the President would have direct access to it.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

- 38 -  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

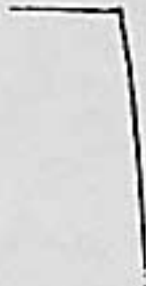
- 39 -  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

INVESTIGATIVE



[REDACTED]



At this point

left

and Commander Mitchell briefed on the chronology of the ship movements based on the ship dispatches to and from the BLAGAR. Inasmuch as the script of Commander Mitchell's presentation was distributed to the members, no notes have been entered herein.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Natl. Archives Review Committee, 6/21/98

By JK NARS, Date 6/23/98

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10 May 1961 - Thirteenth Meeting



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NAH. Archives Review Committee, 6/21/78  
By JK NARS, Date 6/23/78

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MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

PARAMILITARY STUDY GROUP MEETING

AT THE PENTAGON

THIRTEENTH MEETING

10 MAY 1961

PRESENT

GENERAL TAYLOR

MR. KENNEDY

MR. DULLES

ADMIRAL BURKE

GENERAL WALTER BEDELL SMITH

COMMANDER MITCHELL

LT COLONEL TARWATER

IN TO A CENOTRONE

GENERAL SMITH

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

QUESTION: How can we in a democracy use all our assets effectively without having to completely reorganize the Government?

GENERAL SMITH: A democracy cannot wage war. When you go to war, you pass a law giving extraordinary powers to the President. The people of our country assume when the emergency is over, the rights and powers that were temporarily delegated to the Chief Executive will be returned to the states, counties and to the people.

STATEMENT: We often say that we are in a state of war at the present time.

GENERAL SMITH: Yes, sir, that is correct.

QUESTION: Are you suggesting that we should approximate the President's wartime powers?

GENERAL SMITH: No. However, the American people do not feel that they are at war at the present time, and consequently they are not willing to make the sacrifices necessary to wage war. When you are at war, cold war if you like, you must have an amoral agency which can operate secretly and which does not have to give press conferences. For example, on occasion Drew Pearson had almost verbatim texts of NSC meetings 48 hours after the meeting.

GENERAL SMITH: Those responsible for Government have to recognize the fact that once the Communists take power, there is never a change of party or control except by force.

STATEMENT: We can lose only once, but they can lose ten times and still recover.

GENERAL SMITH: Yes.

QUESTION: We have attempted to do things covertly, which really can't be done covertly, and yet the attempt to do so leads to operational restrictions which in the case of Cuba were very serious.

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GENERAL SMITH: I would take issue with the statement that they cannot be done covertly. They can be done covertly when the situation begins to be threatening enough so that you have to be immoral.

STATEMENT: I think we are now thinking of the Cuban operation which was the landing on a hostile shore of about 1,400 Cubans. I wonder if the attempt to keep the operation covert was a mistake?

GENERAL SMITH: I only know what the papers say, but covert operations can be done up to a certain size and we have handled some pretty large operations.

QUESTION: Should we have intelligence gathering in the same place that you have operations?

GENERAL SMITH: I think that so much publicity has been given to CIA that the covert work might have to be put under another roof.

QUESTION: Do you think you should take the covert operations from CIA?

GENERAL SMITH: It's time we take the bucket of slop and put another cover over it. If you're going to deal with people expert in these affairs, who have no regard for the individual or human life, you can't be quite as tough as they are, but you have to approach it in some manner. The Communists will continue nibbling around the world as long as they find it profitable or until we can find a way to stop it. We must face up to the Communist problem and take effective action.

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16 May 1961 - Fifteenth Meeting



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By JL NARS, Date 6/23/78

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MEMORANDUM FOR RECORD

PARAMILITARY STUDY GROUP MEETING

AT THE PENTAGON

FIFTEENTH MEETING

16 MAY 1961


PRESENT

GENERAL TAYLOR

MR. KENNEDY

MR. DULLES

ADMIRAL BURKE

  
MR. KING

COMMANDER MITCHELL

LT COLONEL TARKWATER

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

(The following notes are not a verbatim record, but represent the general substance of the statements made.)

QUESTION: Did you check the Navy plan?

[REDACTED]: Yes.

QUESTION: Were you satisfied with it?

[REDACTED]: For the operation at that time, yes, sir.

QUESTION: Did you check the training with regard to the ships?

[REDACTED]: No, sir, there was no way to check because these were merchant ships and LCIs which had never operated together. The plan was to bring them together at a port outside the country, brief them at the very last moment, and then send them on their way.

QUESTION: Were you generally satisfied with the personnel on the ships, the skippers and so on?

[REDACTED]: My only contact with them was at Puerto Cabezas during the four days that I worked with them personally.

QUESTION: How was their performance?

[REDACTED]: As far as merchant ship skippers and their enthusiasm, excellent. I was amazed and surprised that the operation went as smooth as it did, the manner in which they conducted themselves, arrived at the various rendezvous points and arrived at the objective area with a minimum of confusion was really commendable.

QUESTION: You mention seeing them off from Puerto Cabezas. Did you stay there?

[REDACTED]: No, sir, we returned to Washington.

QUESTION: Did you have any responsibility for the Naval aspects of the operation?

[REDACTED]: Yes, sir, I was the Naval advisor.

QUESTION: Would you give us your impression of the actual execution of the Naval side of the operation?



[REDACTED]: The execution went off extremely well.

QUESTION: That comment applies to the landing in the objective area?

[REDACTED]: Yes, sir. From the little information we have received on the landing, everything started off on schedule as far as the reconnaissance of the beach and the landing of the troops.

QUESTION: What about the unloading plan at Red Beach? How did they expect to get their equipment ashore?

[REDACTED]: They had some small craft.

QUESTION: I have a conflicting impression. One time I got the impression that they expected to use the ships' boats and then at other times I got the impression they contemplated using LCUs?

[REDACTED]: No, sir, not unless time permitted sending the LCUs up there. The main unloading was supposed to take place at Blue Beach. At Red Beach they were only supposed to offload their troops and the personal equipment that went in with the troops.

QUESTION: Did you ever make an estimate of how long it would take to unload the ships at Red Beach?

[REDACTED]: We estimated approximately four hours.

MR. DULLES: We have a report, I think, that the engines on six or seven of the aluminum boats didn't work. Do you know anything about that?

[REDACTED]: No. When they were put aboard ship they had been completely tested.

QUESTION: The reports from the survivors say that all the boats but one broke down, the engines didn't work, the mechanisms for getting them off the ships wouldn't work. Were those things tested?

[REDACTED]: Some of the ships had tested them.

QUESTION: Did you check those things?

[REDACTED]: No. These boats were put aboard at Puerto Cabezas and tested there.

QUESTION: Who tested the boats?

[REDACTED]: Army and Air Force personnel down there.

QUESTION: Were these Cubans or Americans?

[REDACTED] Americans.

STATEMENT: The problem may have been that the salt air caused the engines not to start because they hadn't been turned over during the trip.

[REDACTED]: Yes, but these were outboard engines and you can't turn them over unless they're in the water because they need the water for circulation.

QUESTION: Were you in the command post when the message came in from [REDACTED] stating that he was going to withdraw the ships because of the bombing?

[REDACTED]: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Was that message ever answered?

[REDACTED]: When we received word that they were being bombed we told them to withdraw all the ships immediately. As I recall, that went out in the clear.

QUESTION: When did you learn that the ATLANTICO and the CARIBE had proceeded far to the south?

[REDACTED]: We sent the message for them all to clear out of there and to proceed to a designated point. We didn't receive any word from them, so we tried to check their positions. After a considerable period we received word that they had proceeded far to the south.

QUESTION: I wonder if that 200 miles could be accurate. Did they have time to go 200 miles and back?

COMMANDER MITCHELL: The CARIBE was 218 miles south. The ATLANTICO was about 105 miles south.

QUESTION: In checking over the naval portion of the plans did you have any misgivings about the difficulty of controlling this heterogeneous force at sea?

[REDACTED]: Very much so.

QUESTION: Did you make any comments?

[REDACTED]: Yes, sir, we discussed it very thoroughly. One of the main problems that we discussed was the secrecy of the entire operation. I



[REDACTED]

don't know how much you've been informed on it, but this was one of the big obstacles of the entire operation.

QUESTION: What kind of comments or suggestions did you make?

[REDACTED]: Mostly they concerned how we were going to support these ships logistically. I was told, however, this was no real problem because the ships were going to sail from the States to Puerto Cabezas where the crews would be briefed and then they would depart for the objective area; and for the number of days that would be involved, this was quite adequate. Of course, after the ships arrived there, the operation was postponed, and before we knew it some ships had been at Puerto Cabezas almost three weeks. My first big problem was logistics, but again this was taken care of within the logistics department of the operation section. The other problem was, of course, planning how to get these ships to operate together, signals and communication. Again we had to simplify it to the bare minimum in order to sail the ships and have them arrive on schedule.

QUESTION: Was there any discussion of putting Americans on the freighters to provide better control?

[REDACTED]: We had discussed it, but this idea was thrown out on the basis there was to be no U.S. participation.

QUESTION: Thrown out on the general grounds that you couldn't use the Americans?

[REDACTED]: But this was not considered a real problem because the whole operation was to be accomplished in a quiet area of Cuba where they would have time to offload.

QUESTION: What was your impression of the ammunition situation at the end of the second day?

[REDACTED]: Very critical. As soon as we knew that two ships had been sunk we knew that the situation was going to be grave because the one ship at Blue Beach had the majority of ammunition and vehicles.

QUESTION: You'd say that everyone at the command post was very much impressed with the fact that they would need ammunition?

[REDACTED]: Very much so. We planned an airlift into that area that night and we also wanted to get the CARIBE and the BLAGAR and the BARBARA J. back into Blue Beach.

GENERAL TAYLOR: Did you realize that you just had the ATLANTICO to contend with because the CARIBE was so far south?

[REDACTED]: Yes, that's correct. The other solution was to load the LCUs with the packs from the BARBARA J. and BLAGAR.

QUESTION: Do you recall that about 11:00 o'clock that night they did transfer the ammunition and the packs to the LCUs?

[REDACTED]: Yes, sir.

QUESTION: Later on that was cancelled. Do you recall the circumstances?

[REDACTED]: As I recall, the reason it was cancelled was because they would have arrived at the beach too late to withdraw from the area by dawn.

QUESTION: That's what the record shows, but was that ample reason?

[REDACTED]: Yes. We were very worried about the air attacks.

QUESTION: But if you didn't get the ammunition in that night you would lose the beachhead. In retrospect, wouldn't you take the risk of putting those ships in there?

[REDACTED]: That's difficult to answer. We've argued it out before. It was feared the ships would be sunk and the men still wouldn't get their supplies.

QUESTION: Yes, but those same ships were under air attack on D-Day and most of them came out.

[REDACTED]: Yes, that's true.

QUESTION: Was there any real debate on this at the command post that night?

[REDACTED]: Yes, sir, and, of course, one of the Cuban crews almost mutinied rather than go in on the second night.

QUESTION: Do you recall whether any special effort was made to get air cover?